









# **The Pulpit.**

SUPPLEMENT TO VOLUME LII



# THE PULPIT.

SERMONS BY EMINENT LIVING MINISTERS

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VOLUME LII.

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# THE PULPIT.

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GOD GLORIFIED IN THE PREACHING OF HIS GOSPEL.

## A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. HENRY MELVILL, B.D.

PREACHED IN ST. BRIDE'S CHURCH, FLEET STREET,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 27, 1847.

Before making a collection in behalf of the Infant Orphan Asylum.

*"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"—2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.*

IF you consult the book of the Acts of the Apostles, you will perceive that St. Paul's course, as a preacher of Christianity, was very diversified; that in some places he rapidly formed a flourishing church, whilst in others he encountered fierce persecution, and could make little or no impression on the reigning idolatry. And it is very remarkable, that although defeat was thus mingled with success, repulse with acceptance, the apostle could nevertheless, in the verse preceding our text, break into the exclamation—"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place." He speaks as though he were already a conqueror; as though, wheresoever he preached, the Gospel found an immediate and a cordial reception. You would think, from his tone, that he had only to enter a city, and its idols trembled, and falsehood gave place to truth. How, then, is this? If we consult the history, we find the apostle often baffled, and Christianity as proclaimed by him often unable to overcome inveterate superstitions: whereas, if we are to judge from his expressions of thankfulness and joy, he was "always made to triumph in Christ;" the place was never found, in which he was not instrumental in so manifesting the Gospel as to bring glory to God.

In our text St. Paul explains the apparent contradiction. He does not mean to imply, by his burst of triumphant praise, that all, or even the majority of

those who heard the Gospel from his lips, received it as God's Word, or listened to its statements; he does not lead you to suppose that he met with uninterrupted success—that there were no lands or no cities, which, visited by him in his missionary circuit, had refused to do homage to Jesus of Nazareth; but he felt assured, that whether he made converts or not, whether the Gospel was rejected or whether it was received, God was glorified by and through his ministrations. It was not, according to his opinion, in the power of unbelief, to interfere with the issue of his preaching, so far as that had to do with the honour of God and of the mediatorial work. "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish."

There is no great difficulty in understanding what St. Paul means, when he describes himself and his fellow-labourers as being "unto God a sweet savour of Christ." The allusion is undoubtedly to the notion, which was very common among the heathen, that the deity was pleased with the smoke which ascended from the sacrifices burnt unto his altars. Indeed, the Scriptures frequently speak of God in language borrowed from this prevalent opinion. Thus when the waters of the deluge had subsided, and Noah, standing on the baptised earth, offered burnt-offerings to the Lord, you read that "the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake." When, therefore, St. Paul speaks of "a sweet savour of Christ," we may understand him as referring to the acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ—to its prevalence with God, as a propitiatory offering; and when he speaks of the preachers of Christianity as being "unto God a sweet savour of Christ," he means, we may suppose, that by setting forth that sacrifice, and causing it to be known, they were instrumental in bringing to God more and more of that glory, which arises from the sin offering which He provided for the world.

Thus, then, the apostle argues. He knew that he had preached the Gospel to many who would perish, as well as to many who would be saved; but nevertheless, he would not admit that in any case he preached in vain. He contended, on the contrary, that whosoever the sacrifice of Christ was made known, there ascended fragrant incense unto God: God obtained honour from the display of His attributes, whether men received or whether they rejected the Mediator.

'But how could this be?' some objector may demand. 'Could it bring any glory to God, that Christ was presented to the scornful and the unbelieving?' 'Yes,' saith the apostle, 'not only are we "a savour of life unto life" to those who give heed to our doctrine—not only is God glorified on earth by the life-giving tendencies of the sacrifice of His Son, whosoever there is faith in the propitiation,—we are equally "a savour of death unto death" to those who remain impenitent and unbelieving. The Gospel, indeed, the atonement, which they have heard and despised, does but increase their condemnation, but God derives glory from their death; and thus the sacrifice of Christ sends up fragrant incense, whether it be the procuring cause of salvation or the occasion of aggravated ruin.' This view of the effects of the ministry with which he was charged, seems for a moment to have overcome and confounded the apostle; so that although he had just before used the language of confidence and exultation, he breaks into words which seem to indicate weakness and apprehension: "Who is sufficient for these things?"

Such is, we think, the meaning and drift of the text; such the nature and force of the reasoning of St. Paul. But this brief survey of the passage will

only have shown you how much it contains, which requires to be diligently examined and illustrated. It may be evident enough, that the apostle designs to assert this or that fact, and yet we may still have to satisfy ourselves of the accuracy of his assertion, or rather to determine its consistency with other truths. And undoubtedly the alleged universal consequence of the preaching of the Gospel, the fact that those who published Christianity were in every case, without any exception, "a sweet savour of Christ," is calculated to startle and perplex us. It does not at least so commend itself to the mind as a self-evident truth, as that no argument is needed, to procure its admission. We consider, therefore, that we have before us a large and important subject of discourse, if we propose to inquire into the reasons which bear out St. Paul in making this assertion; and when this has been done, it will be neither uninteresting nor unprofitable to examine why the apostle has followed it by a question expressive of fear or perturbation. Such, then, are the general topics, on which we are to speak. We are to endeavour to show you, in the first place, with how much truth St. Paul could declare, that he was "unto God a sweet savour of Christ;" we are then, in the second place, to inquire why this fact should have urged him to the exclamation—"Who is sufficient for these things?"

I. Now, we observe of the glorious Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, that it is a revelation of all that is most illustrious in the Godhead, and of all that as sinful creatures we are most concerned in ascertaining. It is a revelation of those attributes and properties of God, which natural theology could but dimly conjecture, or which it could not, at least, satisfactorily combine; a revelation of Divinity bringing itself into such relation to humanity, that with every infinite perfection uncompromised there might be provision for every want of the transgressors of God's law. We need not now expatiate at any length upon the amazing scheme of human redemption; you all know that the whole world lay under condemnation, and that even if it had been ascertained that the love of God had not been alienated from us by sin, finite wisdom could have devised no mode by which that love could interfere without violence to other attributes. But infinite Wisdom solved the difficulties with which finite could not cope; and by giving His Son to take upon Him our nature, and to bear in that nature the curse of the law, God made possible the wondrous combination of "just, and yet the justifier." Without professing to define or trace the connection between the death of Christ and the pardon of sin—without attempting to explain the precise difference which the sufferings of our Lord made in the moral position of mankind, we may safely assert, that in nothing are the various Divine attributes so strikingly displayed as in this plan for our rescue from the power of Satan. The holiness of God—a holiness such that He would hold no intercourse with the sinful, except through a Mediator; His justice, such that there could be no forgiveness, until Christ had made a thorough expiation; His wisdom, able to reconcile what to all finite intelligence seemed eternally at variance; His power, prevailing so to unite the mortal with the immortal, that His Son from all eternity in the Divine nature, should be also His Son as born of a human mother; His love, superior to ingratitude, superior to revenge—prompting an interference that must involve surrender, and sacrifice which imagination cannot compass—these are the displays, the manifestations which emanate from the scheme of redemption. And where will you find anything that can be comparable with these?

Amazing scheme ! The angels might well "desire to look into" its mysteries ; and eternity will be too short to unfold all its mercies. It seems, as a revelation, so to eclipse every other, that earth with all its wonders grows dim by its side, and the firmament with all its hosts is no longer effulgent with Deity. And this is, we think, what St. Paul in our text designs to assert of the Gospel. He speaks as though the carrying that Gospel to a land were the furnishing such a revelation of God, as must necessarily, even if it do not overcome the infidelity of men, redound immediately to the glory of its author. He will not allow that it could at all depend upon the reception which the Gospel would meet, whether or no God would be glorified by its publication. Why should it ? Suppose it should please the Almighty to give some new and striking exhibition of His existence and of His majesty to a people that had been indifferent to those previously and uniformly furnished ; suppose that on a sudden the vault of heaven were to be spangled with fresh characters, the handwriting of the everliving God, and far outshining in their burning beauty the brilliancy of a thousand constellations ; would not God have splendidly shown forth His being and His power, would He not have given such a demonstration of His greatness as must vastly contribute to His own glory, even if the people for whose sakes the overspread canopy had been thus gorgeously decked, were to close their eyes against the evidence, or to hearken to infidel philosophers, who would resolve into secondary causes, or explain by their boastful astronomy the mighty phenomenon which announced the immediate agency of the Creator ? God is sublimely independent of man ; and if He has made a discovery of Himself—of His greatness and perfection—He can contemplate that discovery with ineffable complacency, however it may be regarded by His creatures. He does not want their admiration in order to be assured of its beauty ; He does not require their approval to be confirmed in His delight. And why should we not hold the same in regard of the Gospel ? Why, if this Gospel be an incomparably more brilliant and incomprehensible revelation of Himself, than could be rendered by His coming forth from His inaccessible solitude with a fresh retinue of suns and of systems—why should not God regard its publication with ineffable complacency, whether men hear, or whether they forbear ? Are we to hold it to be in the power of such creatures as ourselves to prevent, by our infidelity, the accruing of any glory to God, from that into which He may be said to have gathered Himself— which is nothing less than a focus, in which all the Divine attributes meet, or from which they diverge, to irradiate the universe ? Oh ! we are not thus mighty. We may shut our eyes to a manifestation of Deity, but this is the utmost that we have in our power. We cannot obscure that manifestation ; we cannot despoil it of one atom of its beauty ; we cannot make it one jot less worthy or less expressive of Godhead. And therefore may it well be supposed, that God would regard the ambassadors of His Son—those who with the cross in their hand hasten to publish the glad tidings of redemption,—would regard them, I say, as more truly the revealers of Himself, than all those worlds, splendidly adorned, with which His edict had peopled infinite space. We may well understand, that as these apostles went from shore to shore, making proclamation wherever they stood, of the mystery of "God manifest in the flesh," they would be viewed by Him whose commission they bore as finer witnesses to the splendid, and the awful, and the majestic, and the beautiful properties of His nature, than stars as they marshalled in their brightness, or angels as they moved in their purity. Who, then, can be surprised at the

lofty tone assumed by St. Paul, when speaking of his own ministrations of the Gospel of Christ? What though it often happened that he was treated with derision, and that men "saw no comeliness" in the Mediator whom he was commissioned to announce? He might sorrow for this; it might go to his heart, for indeed he loved his fellow-men with a love which he had learned from the Redeemer, and very bitter must it have been to him to behold multitudes, over whom he yearned with a generous solicitude, putting from them the proffers of everlasting life, and clinging to superstitions and practices which ensured their final condemnation. But he could appeal from men to God. He preached not in vain; oh! no more than the sun would walk the firmament in vain, if the human race resolved to exclude its beams, and live drearily on in their darkened chambers. Still would it be true of that sun, that he "rejoiceth as a giant to run his race;" still would its pathway be paved with the image of Him who "is light;" and God might look on the luminary as it travelled majestically from the one end of the heaven to the other, and triumph in the having sent so brilliant a witness of Himself to make day by day the circuit of its course. And neither did the apostle preach in vain. He felt that his preaching was a manifestation of the invisible Deity; he felt that the voice of forest, and flood, and mountain, was lost in his own, and that as he discoursed to idolators of "the truth as it is in Jesus," nature hitherto so eloquent, grew mute in comparison, that it might not interrupt his wondrous tale. And with this feeling, the feeling that he was instrumental to the furnishing such displays and discoveries of God as could never have been gathered from any previous work, and that God would delight, at all events, to see how the proclamation of the Gospel went on throughout the earth—oh! the apostle might have deeply sorrowed over impenitence and unbelief, and yet have been ready to declare of himself and his fellow-labourers—"We are to God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish."

But St. Paul wished to state his meaning somewhat more explicitly; and therefore he went on to speak of the two separate cases, in order to show with greater precision how this assertion held good as to the saved and the lost. To this, saith he, "we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life." We do not think it necessary, and so pressed are we by other parts of our subject that we shall not attempt, to speak at any length of the preacher as "the savour of life unto life," to those who "flee" at his warning "from the wrath to come." We will assume your assent to the fact that God is greatly glorified in every case of salvation, and that whenever a soul, through laying hold by faith on the merits of the Mediator, becomes justified and sanctified, there is given such evidence of the efficacy of the great propitiation as must necessarily be well-pleasing unto Him who appointed the sacrifice. But what are we to say to the other case? What are we to say to the preacher being "the savour of death unto death" to those who perish in their sin? It is implied in such a case, that the Gospel did, in some way or other, prove injurious, "the savour of death unto death," unto those by whom it was heard and rejected; and nevertheless that its proclamation, even when thus injurious, brought glory to God, or contributed to the display of His perfections. Are these things so? Is the Gospel indeed ever detrimental to the hearer? and if detrimental, can those who proclaim it, be indeed "a sweet savour of Christ?"

Yes, indeed, my brethren; the Gospel may prove injurious to the hearer, but

- it cannot prove otherwise than glorious to its Author. You are not to think, that the Gospel can be a neutral thing, operating neither for good nor for evil. Oh! it is very easy, through the force of custom, or for the sake of compliance with the ordinances of religion, or from motives which are even less excellent than these, to be regular in attending God's house, and in hearkening Sunday after Sunday, to the statements of Christianity; and it is further very easy, to come to regard as an ordinary and unimportant thing what is of such frequent occurrence, and to attach no solemn responsibility to these our weekly assemblings. I can quite believe of numbers amongst you, that they flock with the greatest punctuality to the sanctuary, and that they listen perhaps with becoming attention to what the preacher may have to advance, and yet they are wholly without a sense of there being anything awful in the ministrations of the Gospel, anything dangerous, anything that will necessarily affect their condition as immortal and accountable beings. They probably regard preaching merely as a particular kind of oratory, employed on a particular subject, and they listen to it (if they listen to it at all,) merely for the sake of mental excitement, without a passing thought respecting its moral design, or its distant consequences. It may never seem to them, as they pour out from God's house, and perhaps deliver a critical opinion on the sermon, that they have been hearing that of which they shall assuredly hear again at the last day—that which if it have done nothing towards moving them to concern for the soul, must have done something towards confirming them in impenitence and unbelief. But we have every warrant for asserting, that such is the real character of preaching, that the Gospel which he is permitted to hear either improves a man or makes him worse; so that none of you can go away from the sanctuary precisely what you were when you entered it. You have had a fresh call from God, a fresh invitation, a fresh offer of everlasting life; and if you have again refused, again turned away with indifference, you have made yourselves less accessible than ever to the message of Christ, and added to the witnesses who shall appear against you at the judgment. There is a self-propagating power in every kind of evil; and every resistance to God's Spirit, operating through the instrumentality of the Word, makes resistance easier, or facilitates for the future the hearing without obeying. So that preaching, when it produces no salutary effect, unavoidably hardens the hearer; for that hearer, the more he is accustomed to the withstanding the engine through which the Holy Ghost acts, will withstand it with the less difficulty; and therefore is he virtually in the position of one, whose heart is made colder, and whose conscience more torpid, by the very means which were designed to warm and to rouse him. And therefore we look with no surprise, though we do look with great sorrow, on the spectacle not unfrequently presented—the spectacle of a man who has attended for years on the faithful and energetic preaching of the Gospel, and who has really seemed to become more worldly-minded after every sermon he has heard. In no other respect may there be anything like dulness of faculty or energy, but in regard of the sensitiveness to moral impressions, the man has evidently undergone a change, and is gradually losing the little which he once had. He may be as alive as ever to the intellectual power of the sermon—he may be as capable as ever of being carried away by the impetuosity, or fascinated by the eloquence of the speaker; but he is no longer restless, as he once was, under the earnest remonstrances, and no longer disturbed by the vehement threatenings

which are sounded in his ears. There was a time when he could not sit so composed while God's wrath against sin was energetically displayed, but when, as the preacher launched forth the terrors of God's law, he was conscious of something like a misgiving of heart, and felt it needful to make a half promise of amendment, in order to quiet the remembrance. But now the sermon hardly ever seems to come home to him. It may address itself to his judgment, it may address itself to his reason, it may address itself to his fancy; but there is a triple band round the heart, an intrenchment in which all the affections seem to lie, as though defying the approaches of moral assaultment. Now tell me what have the proclamations of Christianity been to such a man but "a savour of death unto death?" Just as a consequence, but a consequence chargeable wholly on himself, of his having heard and despised the Gospel, he has become far more steeled than he naturally was against reproof and warning and threatening—far stronger in the power of throwing from him, as things with which he has no concern, the fears and hopes of the Christian religion. We do not say that if he had not been so continually plied with the messages of the Gospel, he would have been what as a minister of Christ we wish him to be; but he would have been, we are persuaded, less obdurate than he is. He would not have been so fenced round by apathy, that we cannot find an avenue by which to approach; he would not have accumulated against himself such a weight of testimony, if he had but seldom heard "the truth as it is in Jesus." Neither is this the only case, in which the Gospel is "a savour of death unto death:" it is so whenever men abuse the doctrines of the Gospel—whenever they pervert them, and thus wrest into encouragements to licentiousness, or into argument for procrastination, those statements of God's love, or those proofs of His forbearance which ought only to urge them to serious endeavour to "live righteously, soberly, and godly in the world."

But if it be admitted that in various ways men may be actually injured by the Gospel, making it the occasion of their own aggravated condemnation, what have we to say to such a result being in any sense or degree glorious unto God; so that this "savour of death unto death" is to him "a sweet savour of Christ?" Now mark me, my brethren, we are to blame in confining our thoughts to the end in which man has an immediate concern, in place of extending them to those in which God himself may be personally interested. We forget that God has to make provision for the thorough vindication of all His attributes, when He shall bring the human race into judgment, and allot to individuals their portion for eternity. We forget, that in all His dealings it must be His own honour, to which He has the closest respect; and that this honour may require the appointment and continuance of means of grace, even when those means, in place of effecting conversion, are sure to do nothing but increase condemnation. For the great point, so far as we can judge, which will have to be made out in respect of every man who perishes hereafter, is the inexcusableness of that man—his being nothing less than his own wilful destroyer; and the making out this, in regard of those condemned for neglecting the salvation provided by Christ, will require it to be abundantly proved that this salvation was offered them, yea, pressed upon their acceptance; for it cannot be shown that they perished exclusively through their own fault, unless it be shown that they had deliverance placed within reach, and might have grasped it if they would. Think ye—can ye think—that the minister of Christ has nothing to do but to confirm the righteous in their faith, and



## GOD GLORIFIED IN THE PREACHING OF HIS GOSPEL.

to ~~save~~ the careless to repentance? Indeed it is for these he avowedly labours, but in acting upon man, he is acting for God. He may seem to you to labour in vain, just because those to whom he speaks forsake not their iniquities; but it is not in vain. He preaches for the day of judgment; He preaches as an evidence of God's forbearance, as a witness against the impenitent—an evidence and a witness which shall be called forth and displayed when the trumpet shall have sounded, and the judge is on His throne. In vain!—oh! how in vain, when He will have to appear against those of His hearers, whom He has entreated and warned and threatened, but without prevailing on them to return unto the Lord—to appear against them for a testimony that they were not left in ignorance, but often, very often, had Jesus Christ been set forth crucified among them, and therefore, if sentenced to be eternally banished from the presence of God, there will be an equity in the condemnation, which must prevent any murmuring, even in the midst of despair? This result, this great result is provided for by the ministrations of Gospel, when to all appearance they are powerless and fruitless; and St. Paul knew and felt all this. He knew and felt, that when he was preaching Christ to a people he was making that people without excuse, if they continued in iniquity, and therefore providing that God should be glorious in dealing with them in vengeance. He was indeed instrumental to the aggravating the doom of those who rejected His message; and therefore was the Gospel “a savour of death unto death,” seeing that those who heard and despised it, incurred a far heavier condemnation than could have been theirs, had they remained in their ignorance. But nevertheless, the Gospel as thus published to convict and destroy, was preparing the way for the complete vindication of those awful dealings, which the whole intelligent universe is to be summoned to behold, and which will consign to utter wretchedness the impenitent and the unbelieving. And if the “savour of death unto death” be thus hereafter to mount up as incense, causing even “the smoke of the torment” of the lost to be perfumed, as it were, with the righteousness of God, oh! why should not God be represented as taking delight in the ministrations of the Gospel? why should not St. Paul triumphantly exclaim, in regard of himself and of other preachers of Christianity—“We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish?”

II. It was this view of the office of a preacher, which appears to have wrung from the apostle those words, on which we are to employ our concluding remarks: “Who is sufficient for these things?” Who indeed? We are sure that it ought to be perfectly overwhelming to a man, to feel himself charged with an office, in performing which he thus makes himself a witness against multitudes. If it be true that preaching cannot be neutral—that the preacher, whenever he stands up in God's house and speaks in God's name, either benefits or injures his hearers, and that by every sermon he heaps up material of accusation against numbers with whom perhaps he is intimate—his neighbours, his friends, his relations,—why, it were to suppose him less than a man, to suppose him able to discharge his office without painful feelings and irksome anticipations. Here indeed is cause for his crying out as one who would wish to be relieved from an oppressive task—“Who is sufficient for these things?” It would be quite overwhelming to any one amongst you, to go into a court of justice, and there deliver the evidence which would consign to death a well-beloved friend. It would be hard enough, if the criminal were

a stranger ; but when you suppose him one associated by close and tender ties with the witness, do you not feel as though the witness would endure anything rather than give testimony ; as though he would almost wish his memory to be effaced, or his power of speech destroyed, that so he might be disqualified for the calamitous office. And what is this to the giving evidence at the tribunal of God ?—evidence not against one, but against many ; evidence which is to vindicate an everlasting punishment, to prove the thorough justice of the consignment of numbers to “ a worm that dieth not, and a fire that is not quenched ?” Spare your ministers this. There is no way of our avoiding this, but through your giving heed to the invitations of the Gospel. We *must* deliver our message ; we dare not keep it back. Our unfaithfulness would be no advantage to you ; it might indeed make you witnesses against us, in place of our being witnesses against you, but it would furnish you with no such excuse as would avert wrath from you at the judgment. And therefore it is only by your repentance and faith, that we can hope to escape what even St. Paul shrunk from, with an expression of dread. There is but this alternative, which can be proposed to the unconverted amongst you : either forsake sin, flee to Christ for pardon, and thus secure for yourselves a heavenly inheritance, or when “ the throne is set, and the books are opened,” he who now speaks to you—speaks to you in weakness, but nevertheless in earnestness—must testify against you before men and angels, must declare God glorious in apportioning to you inconceivable miseries, and must thus be to Him “ a sweet savour of Christ” in you—yea, in you, though you will have made the Gospel “ a savour of death unto death.”

“ Who,” then, “ is sufficient for these things ?” A minister may well ask this, as he thinks of his crowded parish, and remembers how much of sin it contains, and how much of sorrow.

Let us select a single household. The father is just snatched away by death from that young family ; the widow has no means of supporting those weeping orphans ; the clergyman pays his pastoral visit ; he stands aghast at the amount of wretchedness. What can he do to relieve it ? “ Who is sufficient for these things ?” But he knows the asylums, where these orphans may be sheltered ; yea, even that infant, yet too young to be aware of its wretchedness ; and the good man’s face brightens. He undertakes the charge of that infant ; he is sure that the gates of the Infant Orphan Asylum will be opened to one so utterly destitute. But, alas ! may he not be disappointed ? The asylum is a noble establishment ; it has within its walls from two to three hundred children ; but its funds are disproportioned to the demand, and probably the poor infant will unavoidably be turned away. I might fear this, were I not sure that I speak to kind and generous hearts—beings who can feel for the orphan, and most of all for the *infant orphan*. What an untold amount of calamity may be gathered within those two words !

Then I have no fear. You will give liberally ; you will make a sacrifice ; you will deny yourselves a gratification, rather than desert the orphan, the infant orphan. And through your endeavours shall many a wretched widow be comforted, and many a bewildered pastor cheered ; for these succours will give an answer to the thrilling, the almost terrible question—“ Who is sufficient for these things ?”

THE "RIGHTEOUS OVERMUCH."

A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. WALTER FARQUHAR HOOK, D.D.

PREACHED IN ST. PHILIP'S CHURCH, STEPNEY,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 27, 1847.

On occasion of a collection being made for the Church Schools.

*"Be not righteous overmuch; neither make thyself overwise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?"—Ecclesiastes vii. 16, 17.*

WHEN the worldling sees another anxiously caring for the things of his soul or attending earnestly to the duties of religion, he is apt to refer to this text, and to say, "Be not righteous overmuch." When the preacher exhorts the careless to think of "the one thing needful," and speaks to him of death and judgment, and heaven and hell; when he implores a man to leave off sinning and to form habits of good, he is silenced at once by a triumphant reference to Scripture—"Be not righteous overmuch." It is quite astonishing, to see how very careful some persons are to observe what they regard as a precept of Scripture. If they would but think half as much of what the Scripture says of faith and good works, of weeping, of fasting and praying, it would be well with them. But, no; the only scriptural duty, as they call it, concerning which any earnestness or zeal is shown, is that which they would impress on the minds of others and act upon themselves—"Be not righteous overmuch." \*

At first sight, my brethren, one might imagine, that of this warning in this wicked world there can be no special need. And if we search among our kinsfolk and acquaintance, shall we find many of whom we can say, that they are "righteous overmuch?" Do we remember having ever heard, or ever having met the man who has said, 'I have been ruined because I went to church too often—because I have engaged continually in meditation and prayer?' It is doubtless our bounden duty to attend to the business of our calling, whatever it may be; to do with all our might what our hand findeth to do, and to labour diligently in the station of life in which God has placed us. We find men neglecting to do this, their bounden duty, through indolence and idleness, through the love of folly and dissipation; but do you know of any persons who have neglected the duties of their station in life through too frequent attendance on the house of God, through a regular observance of duties at least of equal importance, meditation, and prayer? If in such a case I may allude to my own experience as a minister of the Gospel, I have never yet met a person whom it has been my duty to warn on this account against

being "righteous overmuch;" though I have found it necessary to say, and to say often, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give unto you; for Him hath God the Father sealed." I have found many who, like Martha, are cumbered with much serving—many to whom, in the name of the Lord, I have been bound to say, "Thou art careful, and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful;"—few who, like Mary, have "chosen the good part," and who, in spite of the suggestion that she was "righteous overmuch," had taken her seat at the feet of Jesus, and heard His word.

Perhaps you will not have far to go in order to discover those whose health has been ruined by overmuch study, by too much carefulness for the things of this world, or by the anxieties and excitements of pecuniary speculation. Dissipation has slain its thousands and its tens of thousands; and many among us can call to mind many a one now lying in the cold grave, who have fallen victims to the eagerness with which they pursued what are called the amusements of life. To these, to the revels of intemperance, to the indulgence of the lusts of the flesh, we can often trace the hectic flush on the cheek of the young and the debilitated frame of the sensualist. But while of such poor victims of the world, the flesh, and the devil, we behold a multitude around us, I do not think that we can name any person whose health has been really ruined or injured by fasting, by mortification, by any bodily severities encountered for the sake of religion. I take the extreme case—how far these are religious acts I shall not stay to inquire; they may be, and very frequently are, only acts of superstition. We may all admit, that an excess in these religious exercises, like all excess, is to be condemned; still, the number of those who give way to excess in this respect, compared with those who commit excess in the other instances to which I have alluded, is so comparatively small, that the zeal of those who preach on this account against being "righteous overmuch" is wonderfully out of proportion. People seem to think that some degree of religion is necessary; but while they admit the fact that some degree of religion is necessary, and will take care of what is the minimum of faith and good works which will save them from damnation, they accuse other persons, who think it safer to obey the Gospel injunction which says, "go on unto perfection," of the sin of being "righteous overmuch." But look a little forward. A few years hence, the Lord Jesus will come again into this world to be our Judge. Before the judgment-seat of Christ, Satan, the accuser of the brethren, will stand; by our side he will stand; and when he says of any one, 'I accuse him of being "righteous overmuch,"' what think you will be the decision of the Divine Judge? Satan will say, 'Here is a man who has prayed seven times a day, whereas twice a day was quite sufficient; here is another, who added almsgiving to fasting and prayer; here is another, who went to church every day, whereas once or twice on the Lord's day was quite sufficient—many persons could not go oftener—and who received the Communion every week, whereas once a quarter or once a month was enough. There stands,' he will say, 'a wretched sinner, who sold all his goods and gave to the poor, whereas a tenth of his income would have sufficed; there stands another, who, instead of going into the dissipations of the world, devoted his time to meditation and to intercourse with God and all the things of God. There stands some one else,' he will say, 'whose conscience was so scrupulous, that he was constantly tormenting himself with fears lest he should be displeasing the Saviour and the God to whom he gave

all his heart. All these, Satan will say, 'I accuse of being "righteous overmuch."' And what will be the answer of the allwise God? Will He say, 'O thou wicked servant! thou hast been very scrupulous in thy conscience; thou hast prayed seven times a day instead of twice; thou hast fasted sometimes, as well as prayed; thou hast gone to church every day, instead of confining thy devotions to the Sunday; thou hast been very frequent in thy communion; thou hast given all thy goods, or a great deal more than was required of thee, to the poor; thou hast not shared in the dissipation of the world, but hast given thyself up to meditation; therefore, because thou hast been very scrupulous about offending Me, and hast given thyself up to meditation, because thou hast had a scrupulous conscience, because thou hast suffered anxiety and attended to many little and unnecessary things in thy desire to please Me, because thou hast been so very liberal in alms-deeds, and instead of spending thy money on thyself hast sold thy goods to give to the poor,—because "hungering and thirsting after righteousness" thou hast sought in weekly Communion the grace I have attached to the sacraments—because, believing what I promised, that "where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I," the Lord Jesus, who died to save thee, present "in the midst of them," thou hast on that account daily met with two or three others and attended the church—and because delighting in prayer thou hast been accustomed like David to pray seven times a day, whereas twice would have sufficed—because of these things, on account of thy committing these things, thou hast committed the great sin of being "righteous overmuch," and therefore thou shalt be "cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth;" "depart from Me," ye "righteous overmuch," "into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?"' The very thought of such a judgment proceeding from the mouth of the all-righteous Judge is so monstrous, that we have only to state the case as I just have done, and by that statement we show the folly as well as the iniquity of those, who would lower the tone of religion among us by this fear, lest their neighbours should commit this imaginary sin of being "righteous overmuch."

I am aware—what minister of the Word whom the Lord hath anointed not only to preach the Gospel to the meek, but also to bind up the broken-hearted, is not aware?—that there are some persons whose conscience is not merely tender, which is one of the greatest of all spiritual blessings, but scrupulous; full of scrupulosity—always in a state of fear lest they should be doing wrong—perplexing themselves about little things, and miserable if they suspect that even through inadvertence they have neglected any detail of duty, while they regard as obligatory many things which are really indifferent. These persons, among the best, though not the happiest of their kind, are coldly repulsed by the unfeeling and unsympathising, who have themselves had no experience of spiritual difficulties—no, nor spiritual joys—for if you have not had spiritual difficulties you certainly can have no experience of spiritual joys resulting from the triumph over these difficulties—they are repulsed by such as if they were "righteous overmuch."

From what I have said before, you must perceive that over-much righteousness is not their fault; the fault which their spiritual adviser has to point out is, that they make a mistake as to certain particular points of righteousness, and do not realise sufficiently the doctrine of justification by faith. They make a mistake as to certain facts; but in listening to the dictates of conscience they

do right. All they require is direction and enlightenment—not as to their principles, but as to the facts on which their principles are to be brought to bear.

It is said, again, that too much religion makes men morose; and there are pretenders to religion both censorious and morose. Some, perhaps a vast number of those who assume to themselves the character of being religious, are like the Pharisees of old, mere hypocrites, men who deceive themselves by supposing that under the cloak of religion they may freely indulge the worst and most malignant passions of their nature. We frankly admit that they who preach against being "righteous overmuch" have here their strongest ground. The hypocritical professors of Christianity—who, in times when Christianity is in fashion, form perhaps the majority of persons who profess to be religious, are the most effective allies of infidelity. Their inconsistencies are observed and noticed by the worldly wise, who draw the just conclusion that they are only distinguished from themselves by the meanness of their nature. But deal fairly with this case also—is it religion that has made these men what they are? Were they not morose in temper before they pretended to be religious? Were they not crafty in their dealings with the world before they became deceivers in things spiritual? You do not know any one who, having been frank, generous, disinterested, noble-hearted before his conversion, has become morose because he has learnt to love his God as well as his neighbour, and as enthusiastically to labour for the promotion of his Saviour's glory as he was wont in times past to devote himself energetically to further the interests of his friend, to rescue him from trouble, or cause accessions to his happiness? Frank, generous, disinterested, noble-hearted he still remains; and the addition of piety to his other virtues only renders him more worthy of our admiration and love. It is true, he takes a new view of the amusements of the world; but is that of necessity a morose view? There are religionists who, without either Scripture or the church for their guide, proscribe somewhat capriciously whole classes of amusements. They seem to be morose; they are not necessarily so; but the true Christian dogmatizes in none of these things. He treats all the innocent amusements for persons arrived at man's estate, even as we regard the toys by which our children are amused. He places them among the "childish things"—things gradually to be discontinued as man advances in religion. We see our children occupied with their playthings, and if they neglect not their lessons, we look at them with a smile, and may occasionally join with them in their sports, not for our sakes, but for theirs, in order to express our sympathy and give them pleasure, where pleasure is allowed. Are you morose because you do not take these playthings from your children,—because you yourself find in them no longer the pleasure they once imparted? So, men advancing in religion to "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," cease to take, in a certain degree, the same interest in the amusements and even the business of life. They blame not those who, not so far advanced, still have recourse to these recreations, so long as what is intended for recreation is only used as such, so long as pleasure is not made a business, nor permitted to interfere with the duties of life, or to dissipate the mind and incapacitate it for the exercises of religion; but they feel, every man should be intending to "put away these childish things." He puts them away himself, not from moroseness, but because his mind being occupied in higher and holier things, he finds no pleasure in them, his high employment being that intercourse with the things invisible and eternal, in which only substantialness is to be found. It is not moroseness but advancement, that raises the true

Christian above the things of this world, which renders him independent of external things, while he can affectionately sympathise with those who are now what he once was, and whom he hopes to see ere long, by the mercy of God, even further advanced than he himself as yet may be. For true Christianity rejoices in the spiritual progress of another. "It suffereth long and is kind; it envieth not, it vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." "The fruit of the Spirit is" not moroseness, but "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, patience." Moroseness, then, is not the effect of our being religious overmuch, but of our not being religious enough.

Perhaps it may occur to some, that in speaking thus, I am speaking rather against, than for the text. But it is merely against a wrong interpretation of the text that I am preaching. One part of our text shows at once that it is not to be understood literally—that part which says, "make not thyself overwise." Now, they who are very fearful lest they should be overrighteous, are seldom alarmed on the score of their being overwise. The fact is, that the first verse of our text does not contain the maxim of the sacred penman, the preacher, the son of David, the king of Israel. It is not he, the inspired writer, who says, "Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself overwise." This is the saying, as we sometimes express ourselves, of the man of straw, whose objection is of use in an argument only that it may be refuted. "Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself overwise"—this is the unwise inference of the worldling from observations previously made by the preacher, an inference which the preacher, the sacred writer, rejects. King Solomon, appealing to his own experience, had been enlarging on the vanity of all sublunary things in order to lead the mind to rest on the one thing needful. "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity"—are the words with which the royal preacher commences; "what profit hath a man of all his labour under the sun?" All is vanity, unless we look beyond the grave. In the verse immediately preceding the text, he says, "All things have I seen in the days of my vanity;" as an extreme case he says, "there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness"—such as the martyrs of old—"and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness." If a man acts righteously from worldly considerations—I have seen, he says, that this is vanity. He hath not on that account been a successful man—nay, I have seen the wicked man prolong his life in spite of his wickedness. Even in righteousness have I seen vanity, if this world were the only world to be taken into consideration. So, a little after, he proceeds—"All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath." If this be so, is the inference of the worldly wise—"If the righteous perisheth, if the wicked prolongeth his days, then I say, 'be not righteous overmuch;' be righteous as far as it is convenient, expedient, or pleasant, for righteousness, like honesty, is sometimes good policy—be moderately righteous, if you like, but be not 'righteous overmuch;' do not subject yourself to inconvenience, to acts of self-denial, and painful restraint—to the persecution or ridicule of the world—have worldly prudence, (says the worldly wise)—'be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself overwise.'" This is the inference which the inspired writer supposes that the worldly wise might draw from his assertions. The difficulty occurring here is one which often presents itself in the Scriptures and other oriental writings, for the want

of those formularies by which to distinguish what may be urged as an objection, from the main drift of the writer's argument. In former times men were rather read to, than readers themselves, and the reader was left to decide by the inflexions of his voice what part of the argument was to be considered the objections, and what the reply of the writer. So here, the counter-statement to that of the worldly-wise is given in the second verse of our text. 'This is not the conclusion to which I desire you to arrive. I know the first feeling of man's wicked and deceitful heart will be, that we had better not trouble ourselves with religion, if it does not advance our worldly interests; instead of saying this—"be not righteous overmuch," what I say is, "be not thou overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish."' By "foolish" here, the sacred writer means ungodly, not knowing or not fearing God. Looking only to this world, and seeing that righteousness is not always secure of a reward, but on the contrary often subjects to neglect and persecution, thou sayest, "Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself overwise; why shouldst thou destroy thyself?" so as to cause inconvenience; but I say, "be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish; why shouldst thou die"—be subject to death eternal, "before thy time?" which, by acting on this wrong principle, you may prove.

That in the second verse of our text the preacher alludes to death eternal, is clear from the text itself. He admits that the just man may perish, in allusion to temporal death, before the wicked—the just man may perish in his righteousness. 'This solid aphorism the wise man would impress on the opponent's mind in the verse which succeeds our text—"It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this"—"yea, from this"—my conclusion, not thine, saith the preacher—"from this withdraw not thine hand; for he that feareth God, shall come forth of them all."

Now, my brethren, following the sacred writer, according to the mind of the Holy Spirit, by whom he was inspired, I call upon you to dismiss from your mind all idle fears lest you should become "righteous overmuch;" and in the name of our God, I exhort you to take good heed, lest you become overmuch wicked, and be not righteous enough. Oh! brethren, here is the real danger; this is the sin against which we have really need to be warned. Are we—I put the question to each one here present—are we religious enough? I do not imagine, that there are many here present, whose consciences would become uneasy, if I were to warn them against being "righteous overmuch." What, indeed, are our faults? Are they excesses in piety and devotion? Do our consciences reproach us because we have exceeded in benevolence towards our neighbours? Are any of us ruined by our almsgiving? Have I to exhort you this evening, when a collection is about to be made, to be very careful, lest you should give too much? Is not my exhortation directed to you, to be quite sure that you give enough—as much as you can afford? Have our charities brought us to prison—involved us in distress? Have our prayers, our devotional exercises been so excessive as to have interfered with the necessary duties of our station in life? Are we under the discipline of the physician because we have exceeded the rules of moderation, in mortifying the flesh? Is the time we devote to meditation, to the care of our immortal souls, and that righteous communion with God most high, which, called by the worldly enthusiasm, is regarded by those who have really experienced it, a joy above all joys? Are these things so out of proportion to the time we give to the things of this world, that our associates are injured, our families ruined, and the world has just cause of complaint against us? I



do not—I repeat it—I do not think there are any among us, whose consciences will reproach them of excess in any of these respects. How is it, my brethren, when I now ask you—are you religious enough? *This, this* will be the question we shall all of us have to answer, at the great day of account, before the judgment-seat of Christ. On that day we do not expect to hear the righteous Judge say to any of us—‘Thou hast destroyed thyself, because thou hast been too righteous;’—but to many a one He will say, ‘Thou hast had peculiar privileges, thou hast had peculiar advantages—thou hast been living in a Christian land—thou hast been trained in a reformed branch of the church, where the Scriptures are open to all, where the Gospel is preached in its simplicity and fulness, and where the sacraments are duly administered—thou hast been taken to the manger at Bethlehem, and seen thy God incarnate to become thy Mediator—thou hast had His example, “holy, harmless, undefiled,” to show thee the way thou shouldest walk in—thou hast been taken to Gethsemane and to Calvary, to see in the sufferings of thy God, what it cost to save from perdition the least unworthy of the sons of Adam—thou hadst the Holy Ghost abiding with thee, to create a new heart within thee, and convert thy “heart of stone into a heart of flesh,” and yet, with all these advantages, with all these privileges and blessings, thou hast been little better than a civilized heathen. Thou hast been what the world called righteous, but thou hast not been righteous enough for heaven.’ My brethren, will it not be an awful thing, after having been a little righteous, after having been accounted by the world as religious, to go down to hell because you have not been righteous enough? Will it not add to the tortures of the bottomless pit, to think—‘If I had been a little more righteous than I was, I had not been wailing here among the damned?’ Remember Dives in the parable. There are many like him in his purple and fine linen and sumptuous attire—take care that your latter end be not like his. There are no great sins recorded of him—but he was not righteous enough.

And, ask you, how are you to know whether you are righteous enough? That, brethren, is a question, to which neither I nor any one else can give an answer. What, then, is the conclusion but this,—‘be as righteous as you possibly can; go on improving; seek to grow in grace; attend to little things, as well as great; be always careful lest you should not be righteous enough, if God were this day to require your soul of you. Be very careful lest you should be overmuch wicked; let no man scare you from your duty, in seeking to advance in the straight and narrow path, which leadeth unto life, by their suggestions, that ye be not “righteous overmuch.”

And while we thus strive ourselves to walk in the straight and heavenly path, we have to lend a helping hand to others. For this purpose it is, to train these poor children in the way of righteousness, that our contributions are this night asked; and I feel sure that they who are in earnest about the salvation of their own souls, will gladly contribute with all their might, to assist in training these poor children in the way they ought to go—that they may grow more and more righteous, through the grace of the Lord our God—that as they grow in years they may “grow in grace,” and that they, as well as we, when our dear adorable Saviour, shall come again, may be found before His judgment-seat righteous enough.

## MESSIAH, THE MIGHTY GOD.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

HON. AND REV. BAPTIST W. NOEL, M.A.

PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, BEDFORD ROW,  
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*"His name shall be called, The Mighty God."*—Isaiah ix. 6.

THIS prediction refers to the promised Child, who was to come into the world, "to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel." "The government" was to "be upon His shoulder," and "His name" was to "be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God." As we have already shown, He was not to bear those names familiarly, but to be what those names describe. Jesus, the Messiah, to whom this prediction refers, never bore these names literally whilst on earth, but was what they describe; according to the language in the book of God elsewhere, respecting the Almighty Himself and others, in which it is represented to us, that to be called "Wonderful," meant that He should be truly wonderful in His nature, in His attributes, and in His works. This wonderful King was to be called "Counsellor," because He was to be wise, to instruct the human race; and he was to be called "the Mighty God," because He was to be a monarch as powerful as He was wise, and, therefore, able to bear the burden of His universal government, and impose His laws upon mankind. He was, therefore, to be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God."

He was to be called "the Mighty God," because He was to be so—to be God the Mighty, and, consequently, could exercise the universal government He was destined to establish and to uphold.

Considering the claims of Christianity—the obligation that lies on every one who receives it, to change his whole life, and to live to God—it was not in the least likely that it should be established in the world without numerous enemies, and the most persevering opposition. It was not in the least likely that the enemies of the Deity of Christ (that is, of Christianity,) should pass by a passage like this, which establishes His Deity; it was to be expected that ingenuity would be taxed to the utmost, to make it mean something which it does not mean; and because the truth founded on it is so great, and because the consequences to be proved from it are so momentous, it is right before I ask you to use it as an instrument of establishing this truth—before I ask you to let your spirits rest upon it, and be filled with it—it is right that we should consider the proofs that

these words are rightly translated, and that Jesus was to be called—that is, He was to be—"the Mighty God."

There have been many efforts made to make these words mean something else. One learned writer would alter these three words thus: "Counsellor, Mighty God," he would translate "Consulter of the Mighty God." But in changing the words into that expression he has given to the word "Counsellor" a sense which it never bears, and cannot bear; it does not mean one who consults another, but one who gives counsel to another. It is an active participle, expressing the fact that one consults another. Nor do either, as learned men assure us, the accents or the points permit that the word "Counsellor" should be connected thus with "The Mighty God." It is, therefore, a false interpretation; the phrase does not mean "Consulter of the Mighty God;" it means "Counsellor, the Mighty God."

Another enemy of the Deity of Christ, a learned and in many respects an estimable man, proposes to render it, "The Counsellor of God, the mighty;" but there are the same objections to his proposal as to the other. The word "Counsellor" cannot, according to the writing of the words, be "The Counsellor of God," but must stand by itself; and the words "Mighty God" cannot be separated, but must be taken together. Moreover, "The Counsellor of God" is a phrase never found in the Scriptures, and to which no good meaning can be attached, whilst the other expression, "The Mighty God," is repeatedly found there, and found in the same connexion. So that it is to do violence to the use of language in the Old Testament, to change "The Counsellor, the Mighty God," into the expression "The Counsellor of God, the Mighty."

It has, therefore, been proposed by another enemy of the Deity of Christ, that the passage should be rendered thus: "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God is mighty,"—implying not that He should be called "the Mighty God," but that He should express to man the truth that God is mighty. But names of this kind occur frequently in Scripture, and the connexion of them is little different to this. These words are *El Gibbor*, "the Mighty God;" and if the word had been such as Gabriel, Michael, and others, it must have been *Gibbor El*, and not *El Gibbor*. And therefore, if we take it as a name, it must mean "the Mighty God," and not "God is mighty."

This, other learned adversaries of Christ have seen and owned; and, therefore, some of them propose to separate these two words, still against the interpretation which the Jewish editors and transcribers of the Bible have given to it, and would call His name "Counsellor, God, Mighty"—"Counsellor, *El*, Mighty." But besides that, according to the pointing of the words, the two words "Mighty God" cannot be separated: passing by this grand criticism altogether, it is obvious that the words cannot be so used—it is trifling with them, for the word *El*, if it does not mean God, must have its original meaning, in which it is, in a few places out of many in Scripture, translated "Power." The expression, would therefore, stand thus: "He shall be called Counsellor, Power, Mighty;" a feeble tautology, you perceive; mighty, mighty, and nothing else. To give such a sense is evidently to trifle with the language; and no man could have imagined such a mode of evading the difficulty, unless some great difficulty were to be evaded.

The most powerful, however, of all these efforts to evade its force, seems to be that of a very learned antagonist to the Deity of Christ, who would translate the phrase, "the mighty hero," the mighty *El*, asserting that the word *El* may mean not God but man. Now a very few plain

remarks may serve to show how utterly incapable this supposition is of being maintained.

In the first place, the word *El* occurs many times—certainly above a hundred times, probably many more, in the Old Testament. In these places it occurs almost uniformly as the name of God, and frequently in the most emphatic passages, of which it will be sufficient to mention two. In the first verse of the seventeenth chapter of Genesis, we read these words: "I am the Almighty *El*; walk before Me, and be thou perfect." When God would speak of His supremacy and His almightiness, His being alone self-existent, He speaks of himself as *El*:—"I am the Almighty *El*." So in the 90th Psalm, in a passage solemnly declaring the eternity of this mysterious Being, the expression is this:—"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." Thou art *El*; not *Jehovah*, but *El*. So that in many of the most solemn passages of Scripture this name is given to God. On the other hand, there is not, I believe, a single passage where this word, in the singular, is applied to man. It would, therefore, be contrary to the whole language of the Old Testament, if in this passage it were to be referred to man, and were to be translated, "the mighty man," "the mighty hero."

There are various passages, further, in which the word *El* is distinctly contrasted with man; of which it is enough to mention two. Thus it is said in the twenty-third of Numbers, and the nineteenth verse, "God is not a man"—"*El* is not man." Now if the word *El* meant man, this sentence would read, "man is not man"—"*El* is not man," whereas, the word *El* (God) is distinctly contrasted with man, and therefore cannot be supposed to mean man. Again, in the twenty-eighth of Ezekiel, at the second verse, it is said to the king of Tyre, "Thou art a man, and not *El*." Why, if *El* meant man, it would be, "Thou art a man, and not a man." So that the contrast between the word *El* and man, shews that a force has been put upon the word by that learned writer, who would translate the phrase before us, "the mighty hero."

Again, there are passages which distinctly declare that there is but one *El*, and that there is no other; whereas, if *El* could mean a man, there might be many such. If you look at the forty-fifth of Isaiah (and there are many similar passages,) you will read in the twenty-second verse, "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am *El*, and there is none else." If man could be *El*, and the word could mean simply "a hero," a man, there might be many such, and the Lord could not say, "I am *El*, and there is none else."

Moreover, this expression, "mighty God," *El Gibbor*, is in various places the name God has selected for himself. Such a passage you may see in the tenth of Isaiah, at the 21st verse: "The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto *El Gibbor*," "the Mighty God." *Jehovah* there assumes the name which in the passage before us is given to the Messiah, which should be born into the world. We here read, "His name shall be called *El Gibbor*;" and in this verse of the tenth of Isaiah, and various other places, it is said, "The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto *El Gibbor*," "the Mighty God."

These passages seem to me distinctly and undeniably to prove that the plain natural meaning of the words before us is the one, "Mighty God;" which is the more easily believed to be the meaning, with reference to the Messiah, because, in the seventh chapter of Isaiah you will remember a similar name was given to the Messiah: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel,

God with us." So that the Messiah had previously received a name very similar to that in this passage, our text saying He should be called *El Gibbor*, and this other prophecy saying He should "be called *Emmanuel*, God with us."

These passages, then, prove to an honest and earnest person, who wishes to derive his views of truth simply from God's Word, that the Messiah to be born into the world was to have the name of the one eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, unchangeable God. "His name shall be called the Mighty God." If this passage stood alone, it would be difficult to evade its force; but even if this passage, and ten others like it, were to be subtracted from the Word of God, the Deity of Christ, that great fundamental truth of our religion, would remain still surrounded with a splendour of evidence which no honest and earnest mind could resist. The whole book of God is full of it. God has given to the Messiah in His Word all His own names; He has revealed in His Word that Jesus our Saviour has all his glorious and incommunicable attributes; He has distinctly and repeatedly told us in His Word that Jesus executes all the functions of Deity, fulfils all the works of God; and finally, He has solemnly declared that Jesus has all the honours of God.

There are four names by which the Almighty is especially designated in the Bible, besides this name of *El*. These are *Jehovah*, *Adonai*, *Elohim*, and *Theos*. All these names are given to Jesus in the inspired Word. He is called *Jehovah* in the 6th of Isaiah; He is called *Adonai* in the 3rd of Malachi, and various other places; He is termed *Elohim* in the 45th Psalm; and He is termed *Theos* continually. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God." "Take heed to yourselves, and unto all the flock of God, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the flock of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." "Of Him, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh." The most perverse criticisms are not able to prove to me that these words mean anything but what they express, that Jesus is *El Gibbor*, the one Almighty God; and whereas the Almighty declared in one place that His name was incommunicable and incomprehensible, being "I AM THAT I AM," and said that Moses should declare to his people, "I AM hath sent me unto you," the self-existent, eternal, and incomprehensible Jesus Christ, when He would declare to the Jews that He had lived before the time of Abraham, though He was at that time a man less than thirty-three years of age in this world, solemnly said, "Before Abraham was, I am." So that He bears the names of God.

Moreover, the Word of God declares, in innumerable places (many of which I have marked down, but cannot enter upon now, because it would too far divert us from our purpose,) that He has the attributes of God. The Word of God declares that Jesus came down from heaven, that He was the companion of God, that He was with the Father from all eternity, and was Himself eternal. It speaks of Him as exercising omnipotent power; He is also declared to be omnipresent and omniscient. Distinctly does the Apostle say of Him, that He is unchangeable. And thus all the great and incommunicable attributes of God are ascribed to Jesus our Saviour.

Nor less distinctly do the Scriptures speak of Him as executing all the powers of God. The works that He wrought when He was upon earth were such as nothing but the Divine power could accomplish; and those works were wrought in His name, and therefore by His own Divine power. He banished disease, He commanded the elements, He made

the very devils obey Him, He created food, He recalled departed spirits to their bodies, which they had deserted, and Himself, by His own power, rose again from the dead, after He had descended into the grave. These are the works of God.

But the Scriptures obviously, in many places, ascribe to Him these powers in a sense far higher than those miracles which He wrought when He was upon earth. "By Him were all things created," the apostle declares in his epistle to the Colossians. "God by Him made the worlds," we read in the epistle to the Hebrews. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." He is also declared by the apostle Paul, in several places, to "uphold all things." He is the Preserver of those worlds which He has formed: "upholding all things by the word of His power." To Him is ascribed, as God, the power of forgiving sins. He forgave them when He was upon earth; and hence the apostle, in writing to the churches, could tell them that they were forgiven their sins by Christ. To Him is ascribed also the power of raising the dead. He has life in Himself, and can restore life to our decayed frames. He will, by His mighty word, at length raise the dead; and this Glorious Being, now on the throne of the universe, will at length summon all departed beings to His bar, and will there, with a power nothing less than infinite, and a knowledge truly divine, determine, according to the secret thoughts of all the millions that ever lived, their destinies in the eternal world. So that the works of God are likewise frequently ascribed to Jesus our Saviour, in the Holy Scriptures.

And, lastly, God has declared that He should have the honour of God. It was His will that "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father;" and for this reason was it assigned to Him, that He should judge the quick and dead at His appearing and His kingdom. Angels, when He came into this world, were therefore summoned to worship the Man, Christ Jesus; and when He ascended up to His glory, by His own Divine power, then did all of His disciples begin to call upon His name, and worship Him as God. Just as they invoked the name of God, so did they invoke the name of Jesus; just as they spread out their wants before their heavenly Father, so did they spread them out before their Divine Redeemer. All beings are destined to bow the knee before Him, reluctantly or voluntarily. "Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Do not these frequent expressions of God's Word, then, sustain the statement of our text, and prove that we cannot err when we believe this prediction to mean that Jesus, the Christ, should be called "the Mighty God?" If He were not "the Mighty God," just consider for a moment what the consequences of that supposition must be.

If Jesus is not "the Mighty God," but is what a learned enemy of Christianity declares, an illustrious man, why then, my brethren, Jesus Christ misled His disciples, and misled His enemies, when He was on earth. When He claimed to be one with God; when He declared Himself to be the Son of God, so that He had a right to work on His sabbath, as His Father worked; when He proclaimed that He was the "I AM;" when He declared that by His own power He would rise again from the dead,—He led the Jews to believe that He was an impostor; they be-

lieved it, and He never undeceived them : He still maintained His assertions, and led them to believe He was a deceiver. Now if He were not, and if He knew He was not, "the Mighty God," then He was an impostor, and the Jews were right ; and between this statement—that Jesus is an impostor, and Jesus is "the Mighty God"—there is no standing place, there is no rest for the mind. It is vain to say He is worthy of our profound veneration, but not worthy to be adored ; Jesus is either God, or Jesus was a blasphemer, and the Jews were right ; and if they ought not to have bowed to Him, as their Divine Redcemer, then, by the Mosaic law, they were bound to put Him to death. But He who claimed these glories, died for our sakes in the hands of His enemies ; by an energy the grave could not resist, and devils could not extinguish, rose again, and in sight of His admiring and joyful followers ascended up to His glory. Therefore, Jesus was "the Mighty God."

If He were not God, then had the Jews only judged rightly in putting Him to death, according to the Mosaic law. For that God would have blessed them, who declared that if they resisted and rejected idolatry, they should be blessed by Him. But for that very act those Jews were then sentenced to rapid destruction, and the wrath of God speedily came upon them to the utmost ; and now, through many centuries, for a work which if Jesus was not "the Mighty God," was a work of justice and of duty, they are miserable wanderers upon the earth. Could God thus punish an action which would be in itself laudable, if Jesus were not God ?

And what were His disciples, upon this supposition, who went forth from Jerusalem itself to declare this risen Saviour—to tell the world that He was "God manifest in the flesh," before all His enemies, and even to seal their testimony with their lives ? These were no enthusiasts ; they could not have mistaken His words ; there were too many to be deceived. Or if they could have been deceived, how are we to understand the fact that they spoke in foreign languages, that they wrought wondrous miracles, that they communicated supernatural gifts throughout the world ? How was it possible that they could thus sanction and uphold the grossest imposition ever practised upon mankind ? If Jesus was not God, then there never has been a delusion so complete as that which they were the instruments of promulgating among mankind, with a success not only unparalleled, but even inconceivable.

And if they had been thus mistaken, and Jesus was not God, then what is the condition of Christians now ? Let us remember that there is no interval—there is nothing between a just worship of Jesus, as Divine, and the most deep-rooted, the most obstinate, the most obnoxious idolatry that this earth has ever witnessed. It is vain to declare that we are innocent ; God's Word declares that the idolater shall be accursed. And if Jesus is not God, you and I are idolaters ; and idolaters, whatever men may fancy, "shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone," because they are an abomination to the infinite God. And yet, if we believe in Him as our Saviour, God will dignify us with immortal honours, and has raised us into the condition of His children. "Ye are all the children of God." Why ? For your good actions ? For your repentance ? For your devotedness ? No ; ye are all the children of God because you trust in a Divine Saviour : "Ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus." So that the same faith which would make you idolaters, worthy of eternal fire, raises you to the condition of God's children, to be blessed with Him for ever !

If Jesus is not the Son of God, Divine, "the Mighty God," then you and I are trusters in man, and our doom is pronounced in those emphatic

words of the prophet Jeremiah: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord;" because trust in man diverts the heart from the Lord. The man who trusts in man to save him is by God's sure Word accursed. Whether that man be himself or another, it makes no difference; the man who rests his hope of everlasting happiness on anything short of God Himself, must (and justly) be accursed. Trust in Jesus Christ is that which alone has removed from us the intolerable load of the Divine wrath, which alone has swept away our guilt, and made us stand blameless before God. "Therefore we conclude," says the apostle, "that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." "By faith" in whom? "By faith" in the Man Christ Jesus. And if He is not God, then we are trusting in man, and there is this opposition between the words of God Himself—that the very same act exposes us to the curse, and frees us from the curse. It is impossible.

If Jesus be not God, what is the Word of God? How has it been constructed? It was taught to holy men by the Spirit of God, indited by Him, so that each word is in its proper place, and conveys its proper meaning, and, as the gift of Infinite Wisdom, was designed to lead mankind to glory. And what has it done? It has led us helplessly to the most intolerable error: not when we were thoughtless, but when we were most thoughtful; not when we were ignorant of its worth, but when we searched it, hour by hour, in earnest; not when we depended on ourselves, but when we asked guidance of God! After all, this Word of God, constructed by Him, has led us helplessly into an intolerable error! Is it conceivable? To ascribe this to God is to impute to Him what the worst tyrant on earth would never do—blind us first, and then punish us for that blindness.

If Jesus be not God, then truth has been stricken with impotence in the world, and error has clothed itself with all the powers of truth. If Jesus be not God, a delusion has been the greatest benefaction to mankind; there has been no good done on earth comparable to that which has been done by this error. You cannot show a single truth—no, nor ten truths—that have wrought for mankind such amazing benefit as the atoning sacrifice of Christ, by which the human heart, alienated and shut against God, at last opens to receive its Maker and its King; by which societies and nations have been regenerated, in the lower sense of the word—made other than what they were. While some have received regeneration of heart before God, nations have had their institutions purified, and their national character raised and elevated, by this error which has been promulgated among mankind. God has signally blessed error, and frowned on truth. If Jesus be not God, then the Almighty, in giving circulation to that error, allowed innumerable beings—the most thoughtful, the most devout, the most prayerful in spirit, those who loved and served Him most diligently—to embrace it; and those who did not embrace it were suffered now and then to make some miserable, abortive effort, which terminated in nothing, while idolaters, under the curse of God, have been sending their missionaries every where, and carrying on their most strenuous efforts for the conversion of the world, and are now looking for the world's conquest.

If I could think that Jesus was not God, I could no longer understand God's providence. It would seem to me that there was an obscuration come upon all the attributes of God. From that moment religion would seem to me a chaos, and despair inseparably interwoven with the destinies of mankind. How could we come to this falsehood? It is not



because numbers held it, it is not because our fathers maintained it; you and I would have willingly abandoned it, if it was not in God's Word. I would become a Unitarian to-morrow if God's Word did not teach me the Deity of Christ. There is nothing else but reverence for God and reverence for his Word which makes me maintain it, or you either. And, therefore, in deep reverence for God's Word, looking up to Him for guidance, meaning to say what He says, to maintain what He maintains, and to be what He declares, we have been led, according to this hypothesis, to the maintenance of an error fundamental in its character, and on which God must frown. There would be an eternal confusion in religion if it were not true that Jesus is "the Mighty God."

But, thanks be to God, it is plain and true, and eternity will seal it, that Jesus the Saviour was to be "the Mighty God."

Is it said 'that God has declared that there could be no one else God but Him, and therefore this "Child," to be born into the world, could not be God—that He was to be a man, and a man could not be God?' It is true that He was to be man, perfect man; and His wonderful goodness is all identified with that humiliation. It was that very humiliation which made Him our Saviour. But He is "Emmanuel," "God manifest in the flesh"—God assuming human nature into conjunction with the Divine.

Does any man ask 'how that union can exist?' How can the soul be united with the body—an immaterial thing tied to what is material? Who can say how the spirit exists without the body? Who could pretend to limit the Almighty? No one has ever done so; and no one can ever prove that there is any contradiction in the incarnation; and nothing more is needed to establish our faith.

Would any enemy of the Deity of our Lord ask me 'to explain that union?' Ask a fly to explain the planetary system first; ask a worm to point out the limits of the universe first; and it would be just as reasonable, as to ask a man to explain the nature of God, or how that Godhead could unite itself with man. But just as you can understand (at least, I suppose any one can understand,) as a fact, though he can no further explain it, that the Infinite God could assume the human form, (as He often did assume it,) without the Divine nature being thereby limited, so may we believe that He could assume the human mind too, without the Divine nature being thereby limited.

And thus Jesus became "Emmanuel," "God manifest in the flesh;" and in that assumption of our nature into union with His own, has wrought out a redemption which without such incarnation must have been impossible.

And being thus "the Mighty God," Jesus has power to save. Whatever is said of *El* is said of Him: He is "the Mighty *El*." And when God said to Abraham, "I am the Almighty God," we ground upon that declaration that Jesus is "the Almighty God." He has the power to rescue us from ruin, because He is God—"the Mighty God."

Dwell for one moment on His matchless and beneficent power. He has had power to atone for our sins, which God incarnate alone could have done; He has had power to move away the load of guilt that would have crushed us for ever; He has had power to exchange many a rebellious heart in this congregation, and to make it His own; He has had power to "take away the stony heart," which no created being could have reached, and to give in its place "a heart of flesh;" He has been able to overcome the malice of Satan, seeking to destroy us, and to guard us against all the evil influences of the world; and He is able to open

heaven for us, and to give us a place upon His throne, and to make us glorious as Himself for ever, because He is "the Mighty God." And He is able to do for mankind at large what He has done for us; He is able to reveal the laws of the Deity throughout the whole earth; He is able to convert millions to Himself; He can pour forth His Holy Spirit among the nations, as He does among the individuals whom He has selected from among the nations hitherto; He is able to make the whole world bow at His feet, even the most obstinate enemies that breathe; He is able to make the wise and the learned count it their honour to employ their faculties for Him; He is able to make little children and ignorant persons glorify Him with the holiness of their lives, and diffuse good around them, as far as their feebleness of capacity will admit; He is able to make monarchs and princes live in piety, and simplicity, and devotedness, and obedience to His word; He is able to raise the degraded masses of our countrymen, whom no charity seems able to reach, and make them the sons and daughters of God; He is able to make the most backward nations of the earth on a level with the most refined; and He is able to change every nation and institution of the world, until this earth rejoices as a garden full of flowers, which the Lord hath blessed, and glorifies that great Creator whom for so many ages it has dishonoured or overlooked.

Yes, Jesus is "the Mighty God," and all that has been predicted of Him shall receive a mighty accomplishment; for He—the loveliest of all characters, as well as the most powerful of all monarchs—has said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

On this Saviour, then, let us depend; this Saviour let us adore; and let us bless God, my friends, that He has given us such a Saviour. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Let us feel the goodness of God as it deserves. There is no gift like this. If He had endowed us with all the gifts of nature and of fortune—if He had made our way the most prosperous on the earth—if He would still, to the last moment, uphold and bless us,—all these gifts of His goodness would not bear one moment's comparison with this His greatest and best act of goodness. "Herein is love, that He has given us" Christ—Him of whom it could be said, that He was "the Mighty God."

If Jesus has thus come to our earth, "Emmanuel, God with us," then, my brethren, let us adore the riches of His grace who sunk so low, and rendered it possible that His enemies should thus reason against His authority and His power, because He chose to come down to the very verge of our miserable state, in order that He might rescue us from it. "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, to Him be glory for ever and ever." "We shall see Him," one day, "as He is:" we shall then be happy beyond all thought, and good beyond all stain and danger; then we shall know what it was for "the Mighty God" to come down to such an abject condition for our welfare, and to suffer the accursed death of the cross, that we might not perish.

And, lastly, let us trust Him. The language of His Word, with reference to the Church of God universally, in all ages, is this: "They shall say, Behold, God is my salvation"—"Behold, *El* is my salvation." Jesus is "the Mighty *El*;" and, therefore, this is He who is our salvation. Jesus has died in order that we might live, and has become the salvation of our souls; and on Him our whole hope rests. If Christ befriend us, there is no power in the universe that can do us hurt. His death has merited our pardon; His grace can renew our souls; His

fidelity can keep us from every danger ; His love can place us in glory, and make us happy and blessed like Himself. Now it is our part to trust in His person and work, in stedfast and simple faith.

Trust, my brethren, I beseech you, in nothing else. Trust not one solitary hope on what you have done, or on what you have been. Do not rest on the work of the Spirit within you, but trust in the work of Christ without you. Trust upon what He has done to save your souls for ever. Use that one plea daily, in your prayers before God, as you will assuredly use no other, when you stand before Him at last. Everything else will then seem weak and worthless as the web of the spider ; everything else will seem utterly unable to resist the artillery of Divine wrath ; the merit of Christ is the only refuge which will enable you to endure the tempest of wrath which shall destroy the ungodly. Plead that merit now, as you will plead it before the judgment-seat hereafter ; and when you think of this blessed and glorious truth, that Jesus is "the Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God," then learn from it that your hope must be exclusively on Him, now and for evermore.

THE BIBLE.

A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. JOHN CUMMING, D.D.

PREACHED IN THE SCOTCH NATIONAL CHURCH, CROWN COURT, COVENT GARDEN,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 6, 1847.

*“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this Book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through His name.”—John xx. 30, 31.*

It seems evident, that the “many other signs,” or things, which are declared to have been done by Jesus, were done subsequent to His resurrection, and not previous to that event. The evangelist speaks in this chapter plainly of the things that Jesus did subsequent to His resurrection, and scarcely, if at all, of signs and miracles and things, which He did previous to it. Yet does the expression apply to all the biography of Jesus. What was true of His last doings on earth is true of His first; and therefore the evangelist says, of all that Jesus did—“Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this Book.”

It may then be asked as perhaps a preliminary question—Have any of these things been recorded at all? Are any of these “other things,” which are not recorded in this Book, recorded in any other book upon earth? and if so recorded, in what tongue is that book written, and in what place of the earth—in what library—in whose possession is it to be found? Has it been read, collated, and explained? Is it still accessible? What are its contents? We desire to know. To these questions only one true answer can be given—No such book has been written; no such record, as far as we know, is in existence. If it be, produce it,—but mind you, we shall believe its contents only in as far as they coincide with the contents of the Bible, and we shall repudiate, reject, and despise them, just in as far as they contravene the plain announcements of Holy Writ.

When you hear persons speak of what are called the doctrines of tradition, and magnify their importance and their use, and say we ought to receive tradition with the same deference with which we receive the Scriptures, you are warranted in giving this, the only proper reply—We cannot discuss the propriety or the truth of things that are not yet exhibited; produce the tradition, prove it to have been uttered by an apostle, trace irrefragably its descent, demonstrate its Divine origin, and then, and only then, we receive that tradition just as we receive the most stupendous truths in the oracles of God. But if your tradition is the mere hearsay of man, or the mere opinions of priests—the accumulations of ages, the successive layers of error, the strata of superstition, and if it contradicts or adds to, or takes from this Word, we must reject it as inspired, or essential to our faith, however ancient it may be. If it coincide with this Word, we receive it, not as inspired, because the sacred canon is complete, but as based upon, and not contrary to the Holy Scriptures of God.

It is thus, then, that whatever "other things Jesus did, which are not written in this Book,"—and there were bright and beautiful thoughts in that heart of hearts, which are not written here—there were glorious and startling deeds done by that Omnipotent hand, which are not recorded here—there were thrilling and impressive sermons, that awed the multitude, and left permanent and beneficial effects, which are not recorded here,—were not necessary. If all had been written, no ordinary book would have contained them; and if there were a book adequate to contain them, that book could not have become the popular and accessible book that the Bible is, to be purchased for a shilling, but a great and ponderous folio, only to be procured at a large expence.

These have not been written, for a very simple and satisfactory reason,—they were not necessary. If they had been needful, they had been here. Inspiration is as much displayed in omitting what was unnecessary, as in committing what was essential and profitable. The Spirit of God has therefore left out many a saying that might have pleased the intellect, but He has left out nothing that can sanctify the heart; the Spirit of God has omitted many a deed, that would have awed by its magnificence, but He has omitted not one solitary action of Jesus that forms in itself a necessary as well as a beautiful model, or can be attached to Scripture as an impressive and a conclusive seal. In one word, the Bible ministers not to the curiosity of the learned few, but to the salvation of the perishing many; you have in the Bible a book not to please the inquisitive, but a book to illuminate the ignorant, and guide the pilgrim to his God, his country, and his home.

What is true, I say, of the Gospel of John, is true, I believe I may add, of the whole of the Word of God. To refer, for instance, to the book of Genesis: we might have wished that God had given us there a revelation of suns and stars and systems, which the telescope of Lord Rosse has failed in its greatest sweep to disclose; or we might have wished that God had revealed in Genesis the records of those *Ichthyosauri* and *Megalosauri*, which have been the subjects of all sorts of disquisitions amongst learned geologists; we might have wished that God had told us in Genesis what are the lowest stratum of the earth—if interior contents, its age and preadamite history; we might have wished that He had given us some brief account of the number, the tenantry, the forms of other worlds; their standing in the truth, or their apostacy from it; their relation to the Saviour, and His relation to them. But He has not done so; and for this simple reason: the Bible was written, not to make men philosophers, but to make men Christians; not to cover the earth with curious discoveries, but to replenish heaven with redeemed saints; the Bible was written for one grand and specific object,—to lead the rebel to his king, the apostate to his God, the prodigal to his father. You can be saved without a knowledge of geology, you can be happy without knowing aught of astronomy; but you can neither be holy nor happy, without "knowing Him, whom alone to know is everlasting life."

Now with respect to all that Christ did or said, (as far as these records embody what He did and said,) this feature, I think, must strike all: Jesus did nothing for display. He said nothing to conciliate the *ecclt* of men; He lived and died the embodiment of good to mankind—the perfect model of a holy, and complete, and glorious sacrifice and ransom for the guilty. He did nothing that required to be undone—He said nothing that required to be unsaid; and this blessed Book contains enough of all He said to be the means of a saving efficacy to us, and enough of what He did to present to us a practical example or model for our imitation. Any addition to the Bible, we are now sure, would dim its lustre—subtraction from the Bible would now spoil its harmony. It is the test that never fails, the balance that has no deceit, the rule that has no crookedness, the law that requires no amendment.

"These," says John, then, "are written;" and written for this end—"that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through His name."

"These," says the apostle, "*are written.*" Did you ever thank God, my

dear brethren, not only for the knowledge of what the Bible contains, but for the fact that this Bible is written? Suppose that the contents of the Bible had been left to be transmitted from sire to son, by oral tradition—how darkened would have been its glories! how mixed its blessed intimations with the alloy of human superstition and human folly! It would have set out, like the snowball, pure and beautiful from the skies, but as it swept downward along the earth, it would have gathered and attached to itself successive accretions of all heterogeneous and incongruous materials, until it finally became a mass altogether different from what it originally was. I quoted to you lately a specimen of the importance of the Bible being written, and of the uncertainty of Tradition, from the last chapter of the very Gospel from which the text is taken. Peter, at the close of the twenty-first chapter, said—"Lord, and what shall this man do?"—a curious—one might almost say, if one might speak it with reverence, an impertinent question, because utterly unconnected with the great object that was before him. "Jesus saith unto him,"—the proper answer—"If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" "This is no matter of thine; here is the practical duty that devolves upon you—"Follow thou Me." "Then went this saying abroad among the brethren"—here is the tradition—"that that disciple should not die." Thus you perceive from how little a thing the tradition sprung. "Yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but if I will"—'if I will' hypothetically—"that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Tradition seized upon what it thought a seed of truth, and nourished it—not into the large and overshadowing palm, but into the deadly Upas tree, that poisons all that is beneath and around it. "Then went that saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die;" but it is added—(just what we are to do with every tradition—bring it to God's Word)—"Yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Here is God's Word—correcting man's tradition. So prone are we to corrupt God's truth by our traditions, that even amid the light and splendour of apostolic noon a tradition crept into the company of the disciples, like Satan amid the trees of the garden of Eden, to spoil, corrupt, and mutilate.

If it be so, how thankful should we be that John does not say—"These things are handed down, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ;" but that He says—"These things are written!" In other words, the Scripture is a stereotype, an incorruptible and immutable stereotype; and it is a stereotype within so small a compass, that the soldier can carry it in his knapsack, and the sailor in his hammock upon the restless sea. The pedlar can carry it in his pack, and no man is so poor that he need be without it, and none so great or learned as to be able to dispense with it.

In the next place, John has not only said—"These things are written," but we may gather probably another ground for gratitude—not only that the Bible has been written, but that the Bible has been *preserved* as a written book. I dare say you seldom think of this; but the more I look upon the Bible, the more I am convinced that there is a standing outward miracle, equal to the Jew in our streets—a sign significant of a perpetual Divine presence. No book has been so proscribed as the Bible; no book has been so tortured (if I may so speak), as the Bible. The leaden ages of Europe have not crushed it, proscriptive anathemas have not extinguished it,—the corruptions of tradition have not buried it. Books that men have prized have perished—the Book that men have hated has been preserved. The former lie buried in unknown sepulchres—the latter rose even with an elasticity proportioned to the force applied to pull it down, and witnessed with apostolic freshness to righteousness, temperance, and judgment. How do you account for this? Take the classic productions of Greece and Rome; in many instances they have been mutilated, and many of them have been lost. These books men loved, because they pandered to their passions, and rendered a response and encouragement to all their corrupt and depraved sympathies; but this Book, which men hated, as a prophet that told them the truth they did not like—this Book has been preserved, and remains in all its

pristine beauty, in all its unmutated glory, bearing on its face the superscription of Him whose inspiration gave its truths all their force, and whose authority gives its precepts all their weight. And it is thus, then, that we are thankful, not only that "these things are written," but also that these things have been preserved.

But John goes on to state, that all "these things have been written," in order to lead us to "believe that Jesus is the Christ." Now I believe that this is not the end merely of the Gospel of John, but of every portion of the Scriptures, without exception.

Shall I take the historical portion of Scripture? Adam, Noah, Abraham, Levi, these were but the broken and scattered fragments of a glorious mirror, each reflecting the image of the Lord Jesus Christ; and He, when He came into the world, was Adam, and Noah, and Joshua, and Moses, and Aaron,—all their excellencies multiplied, magnified, and combined, with none of their defects, their imperfections, and their sins. Thus the historical portion of Scripture was "written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ."

If, in the next place, we refer to the prophetic part of Scripture, we shall find the very same result. Moses predicted His advent, David sang of His royalty, Isaiah gave the tale and tidings of His sorrow, Micah proclaimed His birth-place, and the Apocalypse predicts His approaching glory. "To Him gave all the prophets witness." Their lights converge, like rays that come from a distant circumference, and combine and concentrate in Jesus, as "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."

If I take the *promissory* part of Scripture, it was equally "written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ." The whole firmament of Scripture glows with promises, as with stars of varying magnitude, but enduring fixity; and all these stars have been kindled from one sun, and meant to be leaders to the presence of that sun. Christ is the Tree of Life, and the promises are like the leaves, the soft music, and the reflected lights and shades of which lead to Him. The promises are the varying notes, and Christ the key-note, that gives them all their harmony, and binds them all into one holy chord. "All the promises," says the inspired apostle, "are yea and amen in Christ Jesus."

I may state, in the next place, that the ceremonial part of Scripture was written equally to bring us to Jesus. The high priest officiating within the veil was there to lead us to the true priest: the cities of refuge prescribed for the manslayer was there to lead us to Christ, the refuge of His people; the passover lamb was instituted, that we might see in it the Lamb of God: and all the ceremonial institutions and rites of Levi proclaimed in one mighty voice, bursting forth on the desert of the world—"Behold not us, for we must decrease; but behold Him, whose shoes' latchet we are not worthy to unloose."

And, in the next place, all the *doctrinal* part of Scripture was "written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ." The doctrinal part of Scripture is inlaid with His name; His righteousness is the burden of every epistle, His intercession the hope of every Christian, His mediation the great truth that apostles taught, and martyrs died for: He, in all the doctrines of all the Scriptures, is "all and in all."

And, lastly, the practical part of Scripture was "written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ." His love inspires all, His law regulates all, His example influences all. Do we pray? It is in His name. Do we preach? It is by His authority. Whatsoever we do, in thought, in word, or in deed, we do all in the name and to the glory of Christ.

It is thus, then, that all these parts of Scripture were "written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

I think I have explained before, that the epithet "Son of God" is an epithet that every Jew understood to describe essential Deity; and therefore we are to understand by the term "Jesus, the Christ," the testimony to His humanity, and by "Jesus, the Son of God," the description of His Deity. It was requisite that Christ should be man, else He never could have suffered; it was as requisite that Christ should be God, else He never could have

satisfied ; and it was no less requisite that He should be God and man in one person, that He might unite together heaven and earth, God and man—forming a pathway to the skies more glorious than the patriarch's ladder, by which God's mercies can reach us, and our prayers can rise and reach the prayer-hearing and the sin-forgiving God.

But while “these things were written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,” there was also an end beyond this : there is not only the general end—to establish the Messiahship of Jesus ; but the personal end,—to bring you and me to a state of acceptance before God. “That believing ye might have life through His name.” We are dead in sin. All flesh is apostate from God ; death is in our souls by nature ; death is pronounced upon us, as our doom, from that judgment-seat from which there can be no appeal. Our condition, my dear friends, is not merely a slight declension from holiness, but an entire and total apostacy from God ; and we can obtain “life” only from the Lord Jesus Christ, the fountain of life ; and, blessed be God, that in Him, and from Him, we can have life. The life of grace, and the life of glory, are equally with Him ; the life of faith, that conquers the world, and the life of love, that crowns the conqueror, are equally from Him ; the life of hope, that we cherish now, and the life of reality, that we shall possess hereafter, are alike in Christ. “In Him is life, and that life is the light and life of mankind.”

And this it is, my dear friends, which all sections of the visible church most earnestly want. It is not mere ecclesiastical repairs that churches now need ; it is not the addition of a more gorgeous ceremonial ; it is not more wealth, or rank, or multitude within it ; but what the whole church groans and thirsts after is, that life which priests cannot give and councils cannot take away—the exclusive gift and inalienable prerogative of God. One pulse of life is better than a whole popedom of forms ; and wheresoever there is life, that life will express and embody itself in all appropriate and suitable rites. We may have the most unquestionable ministerial succession, if such there be ; we may have the most ancient and apostolical ritual ; we may have the most exquisite music in our praise, the greatest solemnity in our prayers, the greatest decorum in all our ritual ; but if we have not spiritual life, it is only religion lying in state, covered with the trappings and surrounded by the obsequies of the dead. Life is the great want of the church, and until that church have life, all its disputes are quarrels about straws, not worthy to be kept a single day in remembrance.

The means, however, of obtaining this life are stated very plainly : “That believing ye might have life, through His name.” What is faith ? Many excellent Christians are perplexed about it, and very often we take for granted that men know a great deal more than they really do know.

Faith is not our Saviour, but the acceptance of that Saviour. Faith is not a part of salvation, but simply the accepting of, or acquiescence in, that salvation. If you desire to see where, and by whom is faith illustrated, behold some one whose conscience tells him he is all sin, and want, and ruin, prostrate on his knees, when no eye sees him but God's eye, and asking pardon, sanctification, and happiness, and heaven, *gratis*, in the name of Jesus,—that is faith ; nay, it is more—it is fruition. Salvation, (if I may express it briefly,) is the sinner, all want, begging from the Saviour, all fulness ; and wherever there is such a spectacle, let the man kneel beneath the fretted roof or on the mountain brow, or let him be amid the din and traffic of this great city, and upon the stones of the Royal Exchange,—wherever and in whomsoever the heart feels, ‘Lord, I am all want,’ and faith cries from its depths, ‘Lord, Thou art all fulness,’ there is a closing which shall never be disjoined, a salvation that shall never disappoint.

Faith, then, the faith which bringeth salvation, is not a bare naked belief that Christianity is from God. If it were so, salvation would be faith in a dogma, in a mere abstract proposition, and Christianity a mere compendium of abstruse doctrines, which anybody might believe in as they believe in Euclid or in an authentic history of the world. Nor, on the other hand, is



faith a constant digging into one's heart for something to be felt as faith. It is neither the intellectual assent, which is simply scepticism, nor the looking within for some mystic and undefinable feeling, which is simply fanaticism ; but faith in Christ is the intellectual assent exhibited in the one case, and the heartfelt acceptance, without the fanaticism, felt in the other. It is the greatest sinner looking to the greatest Saviour, and crying—"Lord, help ; or I perish !"

I believe, my dear friends, that one of the reasons why many remain strangers to the Gospel is just, (if I may assign such a thing as a cause—I may rather call it an occasion,) its simplicity. You think it is too good to be true. 'What ! salvation, and nothing to pay for it ? What ! salvation to me, a sinner, a guilty sinner, a long depraved and hardened sinner, and nothing to do, nothing to promise, nothing to pay, nothing to guarantee ?' It is so, my friends. If there be in this assembly one sinner, who has sinned for three-score years and ten, and "lived without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world," there is nothing between that sinner and instant forgiveness, through the blood of Jesus. "Believe and live" is the essence of the Gospel. Cast your case upon Jesus—that is the sole duty you have to discharge.

And if you should suggest—"But will not this make men live in sin, because salvation is free ?" ask the man who has been benefitted by some great benefactor, if he can needlessly offend that great benefactor ; ask the son that loves the affectionate mother, if he would needlessly give one pang to that mother's heart, or one moment's uneasiness to that mother's mind. Can he whom Christ has freely pardoned, live in the practise of that which Christ has everywhere condemned ?

Such, then, is the faith that embraces the Saviour, and believing has "life through His name,"—a faith that consists of acquiescence indeed and in truth ; but more than that,—experimental, personal, heartfelt closing with Him who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

And let me now, in conclusion, ask you, my dear friends—Have you any personal acquaintance with Christ, as your Saviour ? Can your solemn and sequestered moments witness at the judgment-seat of Christ that many a prayer has arisen from your hearts for mercy and forgiveness ? Can your closet testify that you have there bowed the knee, and in deep and unspeakable earnestness pleaded for forgiveness of sin ? Have you ever felt your soul to be a charge too precious for one moment to be forgotten, and the Saviour too glorious for one instant to be slighted ? Have you ever felt what is the anxiety—the intense anxiety—embodied in that question, "What must I do to be saved ?" Time is rapidly passing away ; the great ocean of eternity beats upon the shores of time, and threatens to cover it every moment ; "we know not what a day may bring forth ;" the healthiest and the happiest in this assembly, ere another sun shall rise, may stand at the judgment-seat of Christ. Were that summons to come now, were that heart to give its last beat now, were that soul to be separated from that body, let me ask you—not separating myself from you, or my responsibility from yours—should we be happy ? Should we be saved ? Would the judgment-seat be the vestibule of everlasting glory ?

May God the Spirit, who can alone make truth mighty, and my words powerful, bring home these truths to our hearts, and make them "the savour of life unto life," for Jesus Christ's sake.

## MAKE DISCIPLES.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. THOMAS DALE, M.A.

PREACHED IN CAMDEN CHURCH, CAMBERWELL,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 11, 1847.

Before making a collection in behalf of the District Schools.

*"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."*—Matthew xxviii. 19, 20.

ON these most impressive and memorable words is based the whole structure, both of personal and universal Christianity. But the emphasis of the original has been materially impaired by the translation, and will be restored in a great degree by the substitution of that reading which you will find in the margin. "Go ye," is the literal injunction of the Lord to His apostles, "go ye, and make disciples of all nations." In exact proportion as this commandment has been fulfilled, whether in a family, in a city, in a nation, or in the world at large, does there exist domestic habits, social order, public virtue, and national prosperity; while, on the other hand, there are few, if any evils, diffused over the broad expanse of general society, or concentrated within the narrower circle of the household and the home, which may not—nay, which must not be traceable to the disregard of it. If, to speak in plain language—if parents sometimes find their children curses, it is, in the vast majority of instances, because they have never tried to make them Christians.

I purpose, then, on the present occasion, directed as we are more particularly to the subject of Christian education, to consider the initiatory sacrament of baptism, whereby all who receive it are brought into a capacity for being saved, are made provisionally "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." And in doing this, I will show, first, what is the means appointed by the Lord himself, to "make disciples of all nations;" and then, how we are to apply it to our own, and especially to those of our own house.

I. First, then, it is the Lord's command, addressed through the apostles to His church, and binding upon all her members, throughout every generation, even to the end of time, that they exert themselves, as far as in them lies, to "make disciples of all nations." And this is to be accomplished by a twofold means—a means distinct, yet connected and inseparable: first, by "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" and then by "teaching" those who are baptised "to observe all things whatsoever He hath commanded." It is accordingly manifest from this, first, that baptism duly administered is essential to salvation; and next, that with the single exception of infants, who die before they commit actual sin, baptism, even when duly administered, is not of itself sufficient for salvation. It is the first step towards the kingdom of heaven—it is in one sense the most important step, for it involves, as well as precedes, every other;

it is an entrance into the "strait gate," which opens upon the "narrow way;" it is the solemn act, performed for the infant by its sponsors, by the adult for himself—the solemn act of affixing the seal of man to the covenant of grace, which has been prepared, ordained, accepted, and approved of God. By it they who are "born in sin, and are by nature children of wrath," become entitled to the unspeakable and inestimable privilege of membership with Christ, admission into the family of God, and a reversionary inheritance of the kingdom of heaven. But then these benefits are all conditional upon the supposition that the residue of life shall continue in unison with its beginning. Baptism is the starting on the race—it is not the attainment of the goal: how can it be, when we have still sounding in our ears the words of the apostle, who had been called to the faith by the Lord himself, and baptised into the church by a messenger specially commissioned for the purpose by the Spirit of the Lord, and yet who thus describes his own subsequent responsibility: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest, after having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway?"

Baptism, therefore, while it admits all through the open door, and points all to the way of life eternal, neither imposes upon any the necessity of advancing, nor takes from any the possibility, and therefore the peril, of receding. It neither constrains us to "go on unto perfection," nor does it preclude us from "drawing back unto perdition." And this applies equally to our children and to ourselves. If we were to imagine that all is accomplished, when we have brought our offspring to the baptismal font, and dedicated them by His own inviolable Word, and by his own consecrated ministers, to Christ, we should indeed do in part what the mother of Moses did for her beloved child, when she laid the feeble infant in the fragile ark of bulrushes, which protected him from immersion in the stream, but could not supply the nutriment which was essential to the continuance of life; but we should, like her, do only a part. She "stood afar off, to see what would become of the child;" and by this her watchfulness was the life of the precious babe preserved, and he became in fulness of time the leader and the lawgiver of God's people Israel. So baptism demands both the vigilance of the parent and the instruction of the child. We have no reason to suppose, that the latent virtue of the mystic water can be developed by any other agency than by training up the Christian child "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord:" the transformation of the natural man, in whom all that is not sin is weakness, and in whom all weakness has a tendency to sin, whose every sense may become an avenue to evil, and "every thought and imagination of whose heart is only evil, and that continually,"—this is to be accomplished by no other agency than that of the Spirit of God, who ordinarily works by means, and who has especially declared, in this particular case, the means by which He does work; and where baptism has been rightly performed, but where instruction has been either criminally neglected or perversely misapplied, do we not behold many in the world around us—and some, it may be, within the narrow circle of the home—who have little or nothing of the Christian but the name, who have never sought to profit by the privileges of the Christian covenant, never claimed the glorious right of admission into the citizenship of the heavenly Jerusalem, never openly confessed "Jesus to be the Lord" through the influence of the Holy Ghost, never taken up that "sword of the Spirit," nor stretched over them that "shield of faith," armed with which, as with panoply of proof, they could alone make good the solemn promise upon their behalf—to be "the servants and soldiers of Christ, even to their lives' end?" Are there not among those who call themselves Christians many, too many, whose sole solicitude is about the things of time and sense, who recognise no object of existence but to "eat and drink," because "to-morrow they die"—who neither "keep under the body," nor "bring it into subjection," and of whom charity itself could entertain no better hope than that if they die as they have lived, and if Scripture be true, they must be "castaways?"

Oh! my brethren, they who ascribe to baptism the character of a saving sacrament—a sacrament which saves by a single act—a sacrament which saves absolutely, unconditionally, unquestionably, when duly administered,—such are in fact dissentients from our church, which holds—(alas! how can any one,

in spite of such examples as Judas, and Demas, and Ananias, hold the contrary?)—that deadly sin may be committed after baptism, and that baptised persons having before their eyes the sentence of God's condemnation, may be thrust down by the artifices of Satan, into what she emphatically terms "riotousness of unclean living, or desperation no less perilous." No; our church does not presume—nor should her members, much less her ministers—to separate what her Lord himself has joined: with baptism by water, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," she couples subsequent training in "the things which He hath commanded," alike as a rule of practice and as a standard of belief. To look for discipleship whether in communities or in families, in masses or in individuals, apart from these two things, would be only to seek (as it were) the living among the dead; it would be (so to speak) to model the human form, in all its lineaments and members, in wax or in marble, and look to it for the quickening, commanding, inspiring intelligence of the soul, which the breath of Deity alone can impart; it would be to grasp the fleeting shadow, in expectation of the substance, and to build a fabric for eternity on the frail foundation of the treacherous and shifting sand.

To the efficiency of baptism, therefore, catechising or teaching must be regarded as essential, simply because it is the express ordinance of Christ. No one doubts the power of Omnipotence to "open streams in the wilderness and fountains in the desert," to clothe the barren rocks with verdure, and, where no human hand hath scattered seed, to bid the valleys stand so thick with corn that they should "laugh and sing;" but while no sane person disputes the abstract existence of such power in the Lord, no one would presume to expect the exercise of it. And just so it is with the seed sown in infancy by the hand of faith: whoever "may plant," and whoever "may water," "God alone can give the increase;" but would it be warrantable to expect "the increase," where the seed had not been sown? "God, willing to make His power known, and to magnify His mercy," may cause one malefactor to die confessing sin, forsaking it, and finding mercy, even on the cross; but how many, it may be feared—how many more such as he have breathed away the last energies of life in cursing and blaspheming!

While, therefore, it is the first duty of the parent to bring the infant, at the earliest possible period to the baptismal font, that duty presupposes another, which extends alike to precepts and example—for we are to "teach" the baptised child; and if our actions neutralise the word that is spoken, how is it possible to fulfil the apostolic precept, and to "train up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?" It was the saying of a good man, and it is the testimony of all wise men, that "the example of the parent will go further than aught beside to educate the child;" and only those, therefore, can expect the fulfilment of the promise, who exert themselves to render obedience to the command. When the Lord authoritatively prescribes the twofold means, by which disciples are to be made, it is clear that both ought to come into operation at the earliest possible period of intellectual development; and to persons who think that the work of education is to begin at a comparatively late period of life, we would only address the significant warning, that if the enemy sow the tares before the householder sow the wheat, it will only be in the course of nature that the tares should spring up and choke it; while to those who begin early—those who love to raise the infant hand to God, and to syllable into prayer the first articulate whisperings of the infant voice—I would hold out no other encouragement than the example of Paul's "own son in the faith," who though strangely uncanonised of man, yet holds high preeminence in Holy Writ among the glorious company of the redeemed: "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

I cannot, however, quit this portion of the subject, without adverting for an instant to the explicit and conclusive testimony which is borne by this text to the primitive and scriptural practice of infant baptism, as administered in our Anglican church. None will question for an instant that the comprehensive term "all nations" must of necessity include infants, unless any limitation be subsequently either expressed or implied; and if it were concerning children who had been admitted into the ancient church by the symbolical rite of circumcision, that our Lord uttered those memorable words—"Their angels do

always behold the face of their Father which is in heaven"—why are we precluded from believing the same thing of those who have been admitted, according to the tenor of His own command, within the pale of His holy and apostolic church? In this respect our church, basing all her views of doctrine on a plain, direct, undistorted interpretation of Scripture, is content to take the Lord's word just as the Lord himself has given it; and when she sends forth to heathen lands "the glad tidings of salvation," she begins by first instructing the worshipper of idol deities, and then admitting him to Christian baptism; but no sooner does the convinced and converted idolator profess an entire and exclusive reliance on the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, for pardon and salvation, than she admits to baptism not himself alone, but all his house, and receives his infants thenceforth without scruple, as born of a faithful parent, and thus consecrated to God even from the womb. Parents who are called Christian, yet who will not bring their children to be baptised, ought, to be consistent with their own principles, to refrain from catechising or teaching them altogether—for in any case it must be clear, that the man who dies unbaptised, however well instructed, dies also undisciplined; and though we could not presume, on this ground, to consign to eternal darkness, and banish the infant from the beatific presence of God, on account of an error not its own, yet we do say this—that wherever a child through the negligence, the prejudice, or even the conscientious conviction of the parent, goes down to the grave without the sacrament of baptism, there is a dark cloud overhanging the tomb, where otherwise the Word of God would have made all light; there is an uncertainty mingling with the bereaved parents' tears, where Christ had given, through the ordinance of His church, an assurance of covenanted salvation; there must be an absence of that blessed comfort, which has so often dried the tearful eye, and soothed the bleeding heart, when the dear mother could look upon her lifeless babe, the fairest flower blighted in the bud, and say—"I know that my child was "born of water;" I obeyed, as far as I could, the Lord's command; I doubt not, therefore, that, removed before the plague of sin had broken out, he was "born" also "of the Spirit;" and how can I doubt, then, that he has entered into the kingdom of God, and that if I "stand fast in the faith," and "fight the good fight," I shall, in God's time, "go to him, though he shall not return to me."

II. Such, then, being the means ordained of Christ, to "disciple all nations"—first, the "baptising them," and then the training or catechising them "in all things whatsoever He hath commanded"—I am now to consider, secondly, how they are to be applied to our own, and especially to those of our own house. For one and the same machinery is required to consecrate a family, to christianise a parish, and to evangelise a world; and whether in the home, or in the neighbourhood, or throughout his own country, or in distant lands, it should be the effort and the concern of every one to "make disciples" of those who come, by any providential circumstances whatever, within the sphere of his influence, and therefore of his responsibility. And in this, duty, like "charity, begins at home." We are first to present our infants at the baptismal font, we are to dedicate and devote them, even from their birth, to be the servants of Christ and the soldiers of the cross; we are then to bring with us, (not indeed as a scriptural obligation, and therefore as an essential part of the sacrament, but only as a precautionary institution of the church,) Christian friends, themselves "members of the body of the faithful," who are to perform, if their natural parents are removed by death, or disqualified by mental incapacity, the part of spiritual guides and guardians to the child; but when we have witnessed the figure of the cross—that symbol of salvation—imprinted on the infant's brow, and accompanied it with the prayer of faith that that symbol may become a substance, and that the cross which has been imprinted on the brow may be engraven on the heart, we are to take a forward step in the way of salvation, and as soon as the intellectual faculties begin to develop themselves and expand, we are to instil into the pliant and plastic mind those principles which alone can counteract the tendencies of a sinful and corrupt nature. We must teach them, so far as the lesson may be accordant with their capacity and suited to their years, "to observe all things which the Lord hath commanded"—"all things" which "Holy Scripture

containeth" as "necessary to salvation." We must be especially careful to manifest God to their youthful minds in the character of a Father, and to present Christ to them in the relation of a Friend—"a Friend made for adversity," "a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother," a Friend who has power over the grave, and with whom not death itself, though the conqueror of all beside, can maintain the unequal strife.

The piety and the charity, however, which have their main-spring of action in the home, are not to end there. Next to our own offspring we have to look to the children of the poor in our own locality—to those whom the destitution of the parents constitutes the children of the church—who are especially the Lord's poor, whom we have always with us, and to whom we are to do what we can no longer do to Him. And were this done as it might be, and as it ought to be, first in families, then in parishes or districts, then in larger towns and cities, and then throughout the country at large, circle expanding after circle, till it should comprehend within its ample range the entire compass of our beloved country, the island which is now the first of nations, as in the dawn of the Gospel it was the last,—oh! who can tell how soon the beautiful description of the psalmist might be realised in the midst of us, "that our sons would be as plants grown up in their youth, and our daughters as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace;" and men would look upon Britain from the extremities of the earth, and take up the exclamation of the psalmist—"Happy is the people that are in such a case; yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord!"

Our own obligation, however, is in no wise affected or impaired, whether, this glorious vision be or be not realised in the midst of us; and that duty is to gather the children who have been baptised according to the command of Jesus, and whose parents are disqualified or disabled from performing a parent's first and most important duty, in order that we may train them in the knowledge of God's law and of Christ's love. Our first duty is to educate the mortal for immortality; but then in doing so, it is also our duty to educate the active for society. It is to lay the foundation of habits of virtue where alone it can be firmly laid—in the principles of godliness—and to teach the rendering of what is due to man, as a practical deduction from the fear of God; it is to form that character which shall be at once the type of the church, the ornament of society, and the safeguard of the home; it is to inform the understanding, to store the memory, to exercise the hands, to enlighten the conscience, to regulate the passions, to control the will, and to purify the heart. Ignorance, we know, is the tool of wickedness and the enemy of truth; indolence, or vacuity of mind, is a sweeping and garnishing the inner chamber of the heart, and inviting the entrance of the foul spirit; and therefore we are to inform the understanding, store the memory, and exercise the hands. But it should be still more our concern to enlighten the conscience, for conscience of all legislators is the most effectual; conscience alone, instructed by the Word of God, will ever be found the most effectual guardian of domestic charities, of private rights, and of public interests; conscience utters a voice, unheard by every ear save that to which it speaks, and wields a power unsuspected by every heart save that in which it reigns; it "reasons," as none else can reason, "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," and it often manifests its power in compelling men to tremble, where it cannot constrain them to repent: but never is its voice less likely to utter an uncertain or an unavailing sound, than when it speaks to the ingenuous and susceptible mind of youth, and speaks in the accents which are prompted and dictated by the Word of God. It is then found instinct with power to correct the temper, to control the appetite, to restrain the passions, to subdue the will, and to awaken in the mind a lively concern to prepare for its eternal welfare, by first "embracing," and then "holding fast the blessed hope of everlasting life." In a word, in all who are the recipients of God's Word and the subjects of God's grace, it creates, continues, maintains, consummates discipleship with Christ.

Oh! my Christian friends, let us thus seek to make our children Christ's, and He will assuredly make them His own; and we shall thus find that our interest and our duty are the same. Those will love us most, who love Him best; those will make earth happiest, with whom there is the most assured

hope that we shall partake of a blessed immortality. While our children are spared to us on earth, communion and companionship with them will be our solace and support, through our varied pilgrimage; and if they be taken from us, as man would term it, prematurely, it is only that they would be the first to finish the common warfare, and to attain the common resting place. It is indeed a severe trial to natural affection to look upon the grave of a beloved child, and bitter for the time may be the tears that fall upon it; but the Christian parent, who hath lost a Christian child, can never "sorrow as others who have no hope;" for what comfort can be comparable with the thought, that our best beloved ones have only preceded us to "the rest that remaineth for God's people," and are awaiting, and perhaps expecting, our arrival in those bright abodes, into which sin and sorrow can never enter, and where the pangs of separation can be known no more?

I invite you, then, my brethren, as those who in loving God have learned to "love their brother also," to do your part in the great work of Christian education—to manifest your devotion to the chief Shepherd of the flock by your concern for the "lambs," which He hath enjoined you to "feed," and to confer upon the children of the poor, so far as human instrumentality can avail, the benefits which are above all price—the "wisdom" which "cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof"—the blessing, the unspeakable blessing of an enlightened understanding, an awakened conscience, a quickened spirit, and a justifying Saviour. We know, indeed—(God forbid that we should ever lose sight, for an instant, of so vital and momentous a truth!)—we know that the conversion of one sinner, whether in opening childhood, in adolescence, in maturity, or in declining years, must be the work of Omnipotence alone. It would be thus in the church, were a Paul himself the preacher; and it must be so in the school, were the instructor an Apollos, "mighty in the Scriptures," or a Eunice mighty in faith, and mightier still in prayer: but in either case our dependence is placed on the Divine promise, as our duty is dictated in the Divine command. He who said, "Feed My lambs," implied His own readiness to supply them, through the agency of men, with nutriment from heaven; and even under the partial and shadowy dispensation of the law the injunction to "train up a child in the way he should go," was enforced by the encouraging assurance, that "when he is old he will not depart from it." Nature herself supplies a similar encouragement, in one of her most familiar processes: "In the morning sow thy seed, and at the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not which shall prosper, this or that, or whether both shall be alike good. "And so is the kingdom of God," declared our Lord himself, "as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how."

This, then, and nothing more than this, is what we are to do; but this is not by any means to be left undone, whether we have regard to the souls of others or to our own. We owe a debt to Christ our Lord, which is thus to be acknowledged, though it can never be repaid; and if we experimentally know His grace, that "though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich," surely we who have been redeemed with His own most precious blood, shall feel it our privilege, as well as confess it to be our duty, to take our "corruptible things," our "silver" and our "gold," which are but as "dung" and "dross" in the comparison, and to lay them, as they did in old times, at our Master's feet.

But, oh! my brethren, I have another argument to plead with you to-night—an argument based not upon your responsibility, which yet, I trust you deeply feel, nor yet on the spiritual benefits vouchsafed by God to the faithful communication of scriptural truth to the young, which yet, I trust you highly prize; I can plead with you, as I could not have done, when it was my happiness to dwell among you—I can plead with you (alas! that I am constrained to say it!) from a knowledge, a personal knowledge, of the fearful, appalling, unutterable evils, social as well as spiritual, which result from a deficiency of the means of Christian instruction. It has pleased God in His providence, to place me in the pastoral relation—a relation which can but be nominal—to a vast parish, which more than doubles the population even of your own—a parish containing nearly 160,000 souls, but not at present possessing a greater

number of churches, of clergymen, and of schools, than this very parish in which I now address you. Out of 15,600 children of suitable age and circumstances to receive the education provided for the children of the poor, our church instructs about 5,000, and all denominations of dissenters about 2,000 ; so that 8,000—more than one half—are at present altogether without the means of instruction in the saving truths and salutary precepts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And what has been the issue ? for on that my argument is to be based. Alas ! it is that crime is there manifest in masses, instead of being developed in individuals. It is there that every Lord's-day is profaned by the aggregate of thousands and tens of thousands, who buy and sell in open daylight, courting the utmost publicity, instead of that occasional and furtive traffic, which you witness in this locality, where the shop is more than half closed, as if the sinner were more than half ashamed ; it is there that vice aggravates the public burdens, in a far greater degree than either the visitation of God in sickness, or the infirmity and impotence which are natural to declining years ; it is there that iniquities are committed, of which the vilest of the heathen would shrink to tell the tale, and which, in a nominally Christian land would not even have been conceived to be possible, if they could not have been proved to be true. Twice during the last few weeks—twice have abominations been breathed into my startled ears, for which, I say not my ministry of some years in this comparatively favoured locality, but even in a densely populated section of our metropolis, left me wholly unprepared. And the conviction left upon my mind was this—and it continues the same in substance at the present hour,—that no human intelligence can approximate so nearly to the deepest malignity of the enemy of souls, as the man who, having been educated in a Christian country, has all the light of knowledge to devise means for the gratifying of his lusts, without any of the restraints of religion to hold him back from the indulgence of them—the man who has no conception of vice except of that to which human law has attached a penalty, who has no other rule of action than his own lawless passions and his own unbridled lusts, and who is held back from no crime which law does not punish, by the thought of a resurrection from the dead, and by the terrors of the world to come. My brethren, these men who are the bane and the curse of our country, are the men without a conscience, because without religion.

But I would not enlarge upon a theme so painful ; I would not disgust and weary you with a description of the crimes which exist and multiply, where the fear of God and knowledge of Christ are not. Yet I trust I may be spared to see the day, when even in that parish there shall be no adult who may not worship in his own church, and no child who may not be trained in his own school. I only propose now to add the testimony of my own experience to that of him who has said—"Get wisdom, get understanding : forget it not. Wisdom is the principal thing : therefore get wisdom : and with all thy getting get understanding. Take fast hold of instruction ; let her not go : keep her ; for she is thy life." "The wise shall inherit glory : but shame shall be the promotion of fools."

Let none, therefore—no, not one, in all this goodly company, withhold his offering from a work which has its principle in Christ's command, its efficiency in Christ's provisions, its encouragement in Christ's promise, and its recompence of exceeding great reward in Christ's recognition of all that is done for the least of His little ones as done to Himself. Let every one here, "who has received a good gift"—and I trust there are many such—"minister that gift to others," whether it be of his poverty or of his abundance, "as a faithful steward of the manifold grace of God." I know that on these occasions we can but look to the gleaming that follows after the vintage ; still I would remind you, that "a man is accepted according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not," and that the value of our offering in man's estimate is of no concern whatever, if this be our memorial in the book of God's remembrance—"He hath done what he could." Already this day many have "cast in of their abundance : " let it be seen this night that there are many too, who out of their penury would rather give away all the living that they have, than leave the Lord's house without a testimony of love to the Lord himself—without a practical embodiment of their obedience to His departing injunction—"If ye love Me, feed My lambs."



## THE REPROOF OF THE LORD.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. HENRY CHRISTMAS, M.A., F.R.S., F.S.A.

PREACHED IN VERULAM EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, LAMBETH,  
ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, JULY 7, 1847.

*"I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved."—Habakkuk ii. 1.*

It was well done of Job, in the season of his severe visitation, to recal the events of his life, and to cause his motives and feelings, as well as his actions, to pass in review before his conscience. It was well done, to consider all sorrow as springing from sin, and to search after those transgressions which had thus brought upon him the judgments of God; and although the blindness of human nature prevented him from understanding his guilt, yet the search was assisted by the Divine Mercy, and the words of inspiration, through the lips of Elihu, gave him to know, that perfect as had been his life, and upright as had been his conversation—though he had "feared God, and eschewed evil," he had yet set too high a value upon his obedience, and too small a price on the unspeakable mercies of God. He had an opportunity of answering when he was reproved; and if he, the perfect and the upright, was compelled to say—"I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," surely we have cause to ponder deeply on the awful question—"What shall *we* answer, when we are reproved?" We are not left without examples, both of those who have, and those who have not considered it, and it may not be unprofitable to direct our attention to some of these.

Let us, then, call up before us the records of the past; not the doubtful accounts of mere human chronicles, not the legends of fervid poetry, not the conjectural traditions of dark ages, nor the plausible inferences of the learned, but the deeds related by the Spirit of Truth—the annals of creation, dictated by the voice of God. Let us mingle in imagination with the crowds of adoring spirits, who hovered over the newly planted garden of Eden, and gaze on the happy possessors of this beautiful paradise. They were clothed only in their own innocence; and though they were the sole beings of their race, still did they hold frequent converse with the bright denizens of the celestial world. Those angelic forms, that from time to time burst into visibility in the terrestrial atmosphere—those sounds of heavenly voices, heard amidst the shade, are but proofs that man, "created a little lower than the angels," was not cut off from communion with his more exalted brethren. But among the holy ones that then, as now, ministered to the heirs of immortality, we may discern some beings, seraphic indeed, but no longer clad in the armour of heaven. These are they which "kept not their first estate;" and while they retain, somewhat of that splendour which befits an archangel, even in ruins, they still bear upon them the traces of an Almighty's wrath. Animated by the hope of knowledge, and urged on by the incitements of these spirits of evil, our parents transgressed the law, and then—alas! too late—when they had fallen from their

allegiance, did they pause and consider—what should they answer, when they were reprov'd of the Lord. "And they heard the voice of the Lord God, walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, amongst the trees of the garden." We need not pursue the history to its melancholy close. It is but to look on the sorrow, and the vice, and the want, and the disease, and the death, which are around us and within us; it is but to hear of "wars, and rumours of wars, of famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence;" it is but to follow the funeral procession, and behold a brother or a sister laid in the earth, that the body may be resolved into the elements, to know what were the effects of the fall.

If we prosecute our inquiry a little further, we shall find other, though less extensive effects of this same want of foresight. We shall see a whole world covered with the waters of the flood, and its inhabitants swept away into an unexpected eternity; we shall see cities great and mighty burnt up with fire from Heaven, so that "their place could no more be found;" we shall see a people saved by great wonders, continually transgressing the law of the Lord, and continually suffering His judgments, till they were at last scattered into every country under heaven—all because they would not watch, to see what God would say unto them, nor "what they should answer when they were reprov'd." There was a prophet, who had been indeed inspired, whose miracles had been of the most awful character: the most hardened idolator trembled, and the very temples of Baal shook to their foundations at the name of Elijah; yet he too distrusted the Most High; he came to a cave, and lodged there from the face of Jezebel, whose idolatrous priests he had slain with the sword, whose god he had overthrown, and whose partisans he had put to confusion, by calling down fire from Heaven upon his own sacrifices. Little thought the mistrusting prophet, that to this his retirement would the Lord come and talk with him: "But behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, and said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?" Elijah did not leave his own cause unpleaded, but he was made to feel how faithful was the God whom he had mistrusted—how merciful were those providences which he had doubted.

The words of Habakkuk apply not only to persons, but to nations and to churches. He himself had seen not a few changes, not a few calamities, occur to his own people. Judgments had been disregarded, and warnings had been neglected; and now, in the moments of inspiration, when the hidden counsels of the Most High were unveiled before the eye of His prophet, did the terrors of the future stalk in dread array: the banners of the Chaldeans floated on the air of Judca, the groans of famine arose from the beleaguered city of Zion, and the angel of death unsheathed his glittering sword, to visit upon the people of the Lord their manifold unfaithfulness. Such were the visions of the prophet; and while he beheld in the Spirit the coming of a bitter and hasty nation, to possess the dwelling places that were not theirs—while he heard the prancing of their horses that were "swifter than leopards," he poured out his soul before the Lord, and remembering the idolatry of the Chaldeans exclaimed—"Why holdest Thou Thy tongue, when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?" But a little reflection brought back to his mind, that he had himself complained of the iniquity of the land, of the spoiling, and the violence, and the unjust judgment, and that surely those who had been especially favoured of the Lord were more justly visited with His displeasure than those who had been left to be light unto themselves. Standing as he did upon his watch, and setting himself upon his tower, he saw how little his "brethren according to the flesh" would have to plead, in the day when they were reprov'd of the Lord; and he cried with zeal and much feeling—"Behold, his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him; but the just shall live by faith." It was one of the peculiar faults of that people, to imagine that they as a nation did most certainly serve and honour God; the wickedness of individuals was, they deemed, foreign to the subject, and their national deficiencies and continual lapses they forgot. Their occasional outbreaks of zeal, the periods of excitement, when the profession of religion agreed with their violent

passions, stood alone in their remembrance; and priding themselves, as did Jehu, in what, with the same error, they called their zeal for the Lord, they fancied that the Eternal was indebted to them, and bound to protect and prosper their undertakings. Thus were they lifted up, but not upright; and though reminded that "the just should live by faith," and depend on the undeserved mercy of God, they still cherished their mistake, and He punished them by depriving them of all they most valued, of empire and wealth; and oh! worse than all these, of the services of the temple.

The princes and people of the Chaldeans were placed in a peculiarly favourable situation for cultivating the favour of the Lord. Nebuchadnezzar, one of the greatest sovereigns that ever lived, had been, by a series of the most astonishing miracles, wrought both in his presence and on his person brought to a knowledge of the truth, and, so far as we can collect, died in the favour of God. He had continually about him some of the holiest of men. He and his court, and, we may believe, the greater part of his people, were aware of those wonders which God had wrought in Egypt; and in the hands of that great Being, they had been the means of punishing this wavering and irreligious people. Yet with all these advantages, both princes and people, after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, went on in a blind career of impiety and idolatry, till the Divine patience was exhausted, and the anger of the Lord fell on the haughty Babylon. Scarce twenty years had elapsed since that great monarch, who turned to God, had been laid in the tomb; but how changed was all in the imperial city! There was indeed the feasting and the splendour; the sounds of mirth and revelry rang through many a stately hall; but the praises offered were to the gods of wood and stone, of gold and silver, of brass and iron. The vessels of the temple were profaned by the ribald merriment of unhallowed orgies, and the seven-branched candlestick shed its flood of light over the idolatrous assembly. "But in the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick, upon the plaister of the wall upon the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." The hour of reproof was come. In the characters, whose insufferable brilliancy dazzled the eyes and daunted the heart of Belshazzar, the forgotten Daniel read the blazing sentence of his fall. No preparation had been made for that awful moment; and in that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain, and Darius the Median took the kingdom. The example thus handed down was not observed; the empire of the Medes and Persians, of the Greeks and Romans, inherited successfully the awful memento, and alike disregarded it. In the day of their power the earth and the sea were theirs, and wheresoever men were found, there were their subjects. Now, the very relics of their grandeur are in ruins, and except in the mind of the scholar, the remembrance of them is passing away from the earth. They did not stand upon their watch, and set them upon the tower, and watch to see what the Lord would say unto them, or "what they should answer when they were reproofed" of Him.

The mercy of Heaven has placed our favoured country upon that proud eminence on which those mighty empires stood; and though many and heavy judgments have been inflicted upon her, and though from some of them she is scarcely yet recovered, still she wields a moral power incalculably greater than they ever wielded, and is set up for purposes more awfully important than they had to execute. It is our duty to pray and to strive, that as a nation we may take the warning thus given us, and prepare for the day of our visitation, that "we may answer when we are reproofed."

Churches too, as well as nations, have cause to look to the reproof of the Lord, and so to order their conduct and discipline as to be ready in the day of His coming. "Behold, I come quickly," said the Lord to the apostle St. John, with reference to the church at Ephesus, "and I will take thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." There are many ways in which the Lord may be said to reprove His church—by persecution, by permitting the corruption of doctrine, the relaxation of discipline, the prevalence of schism, the interference of them that are without; and though He has said that against His catholic and apostolic church, which is founded upon the Rock, even Christ

Jesus, "the gates of hell shall not prevail," still He has neither promised nor intended that His church should be free from trials, dangers, and temptations. Partly to try who are His, and partly to make a palpable distinction between the visible and invisible church, the powers of Evil have been permitted from time to time to make terrible inroads, to raise a storm whose clouds have shrouded the battlements, and whose waves have lashed the foundations of the yet unharmed and unshaken church.

Let us, then, look at those reproofs which have been in past ages administered to her, and gather from the temporal judgments which fell upon her from their neglect, the duty of watchfulness on our own part. We shall not now speak of the sufferings of the apostles and their immediate descendants, because *they* were called to a career of persecution and despoite. They lived as the scorn and "offscouring of all things;" and when they were removed from an earth that was not worthy of their presence, they entered upon the rest of their Lord. Yes! "in all things" they were "more than conquerors;" and when we speak of judgments upon the church, we must not mention those merely worldly afflictions which hurried the martyrs of her earliest ages into the presence of their approving Master. But when the Gospel was known and appealed to in the courts of princes, when the descendants of the Cæsars acknowledged themselves to be the viceregents of a higher and more awful monarch, then were there duties imposed upon the church which were previously unknown, duties which she must either fearlessly and uncompromisingly perform, or stand away from the path of her known duty, and remain unprepared when the day of reproof should come. And how was this season of prosperity employed? Was it in spreading the Gospel among the heathen, in sounding the promises and the terrors of her pure and holy code into imperial ears? Was it in combatting the temptations to ease, and slothfulness, and worldly pomp; in lengthening the cords and strengthening the stakes of the tabernacle? Alas! no. It was consumed in luxury and splendour; in relaxation of discipline and in a gradually increasing conformity with the spirit of the world. These, which were in themselves visitations of Divine wrath, were, however, not all the punishment that the lukewarm church received. Even the very doctrines of Christianity, (though there were some who kept fast His Word, and denied not the name of Him who bought them)—the very doctrines of Christianity became corrupted, and the poison of heresy flowed where the life-giving streams of the truth once prevailed. It would be a gloomy task, to tell you of those men, who in the pride of their own reason arraigned the revelations of the Most High, and framed schemes which they deemed better adapted to human necessities, and more in accordance with human philosophy, than the plans of God; to tell you of some who denied the divinity of our Lord, and of others who denied His humanity—of some who rejected the Old Testament, and some who curtailed the New. There was scarcely a system too impious, scarcely an hypothesis too absurd, to find followers in that day of general corruption. And can we think that such a state of opinions could comport with holiness of life? Can we suppose, when men are amending the revelations of God's truth, that they are likely to be very scrupulous in obeying His Word? That was, therefore, a period not only of much error and much unsteadiness of belief, but also of much laxity of principle and much carelessness of conduct. Such persons as are anxious to be wiser than others, "wise above that which is written," in matters of belief, who set up their own private interpretations of Scripture, and esteem themselves too enlightened to follow the fathers and the authority of the church, will generally be found too enlightened to bow with much reverence to the precepts of the moral law. But during these ages, God had not forgotten to reserve some who had not bowed the knee unto Baal. Here and there, amidst the desert of the world, was some green spot where the pure Gospel flourished, and an apostolic constitution prevailed; and though the church of Rome became even more corrupted than the churches of the East, still even within her own bosom did she nourish some, who, while they acknowledged the apostolicity of her constitution, and thanked God for the good of which

she had been the instrument, "contended earnestly for the faith that was once delivered to the saints." The warnings which, like the approaches of old age—the fading eye, the failing ear, the decreasing strength, and the sinking energy—give token to man of a coming change, had passed unheeded by the eastern church; her doctrine had gradually become corrupt, and her discipline lax—her clergy slothful, and her laity careless; but she still delayed "standing upon her watch, and setting herself upon the tower, to watch what the Lord would say unto her, and what she should answer when she was reproved of Him." Hundreds of years passed away in this state of criminal indifference, till the day of retribution came; the followers of the false prophet possessed the dwellings that were not theirs; and the crescent flamed above walls built for the worship of Jesus. In times not long after land after land was rent from the communion of the Roman church, till at length, stripped of her authority, and for a time divested of her power, she was left "as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, like a besieged city."

Meditating on these things, let us turn our attention to our *own* church; and here, with much to be thankful for, we shall find no small inducement to "watch." The spirit of the Gospel is awake in her; she is powerfully and steadily aiding the Redeemer's kingdom; and never was there a time when so much singleness of purpose, such zeal, such energy, and such careful preparation was displayed as there is now by our holy apostolic church. But yet, if there be any truth in the warnings of the Lord, He has "somewhat against us;" and well will it be for us, if we prepare for the day of rebuke, and "repent and do our first works." The reproofs which our church has had, and still is receiving, consist not in outward persecution, though there are those who cry, "Rase it, rase it, even to the ground;" not in corruption of doctrine, for she still "holds fast the truth;" not in sloth and luxury, for she has girded on the sword, and is warring against the evil one; but in the prevalence of heresy and schism, the relaxation of discipline, and the interference of those who are without. Can we look on the numbers of what are called denominations of Christians, mark the trifles upon which they separate, and notice the bitter feeling with which they regard one another,—can we perceive the more than semi-infidel, who "denies the Lord who bought him," banded with the open despiser of religion, and the too superstitious Romanist, against the church, and not feel that something is wrong in our spiritual condition? Can we look on the small number of our communicants, our half filled churches, and the complacency with which those who neglect the ordinances of religion are regarded, and not feel that there is just cause of rebuke from Him who by His holy apostle declared—"And if he regard not the church, let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican;" and again—"With such hold no fellowship; no, not even to eat?" Once more, can we remark the efforts made by many to impede the usefulness, cripple the exertions, degrade the dignity, and expedite the fall of our church, and all this under the pretence of aiding and forwarding her plans, without seeing cause to "watch, and consider what we shall say unto the Lord, when we are reproved of Him?" The church of Ephesus was an apostolic church, but her temples are in ruins; the church of Constantinople was an apostolic church, but the Turkish mosque stands where once her shrines lifted their marble foreheads; the church of Rome was an apostolic church, but "how is the fine gold become dim!" And who shall say what vials of wrath shall not be poured out on the church of England, if she does not watch and pray? O Thou, in whose hands are the hearts of all men! we know that Thy people shall ever be precious in Thy sight; we know that the edifice which Thou hast founded on Christ Jesus, and builded up out of all nations, and languages, and tongues, shall be gloriously completed; we know that the magnificent proportions of this great temple to Thy honour shall be duly observed, and "the last topmost stone shall be brought on with shouting, and cries of Grace, grace." This, O Lord! we know; but we pray that Thy church *in these lands* may be preserved, to make a part in that great temple, and that *we*, her members, may be among the living stones in that building.

To conclude : let us consider the words of our text, as applying to individuals ; for if all are partakers of chastisement, surely, all are partakers of reproof. It may come to us in the silent march of time, and sweep from our side into eternity one and another of those whom we have loved, till we are compelled to finish our weary pilgrimage in loneliness, and look forward with an earnest longing to immortality, as to a joyful meeting ; it may come to us in the slowly pacing hours of affliction, when, borne down with sorrow and sickness, we feel inclined to say with the royal preacher—"Surely all is vanity and vexation of spirit;" it may come to us in the tumult of worldly distress, when the walls which we had built up for our defence are carried away by the waves of God's providence : when we find that we have been trusting to "broken cisterns that can hold no water." In seasons such as these, it is our duty to listen attentively, for in every event there is, if we will but hear it, a voice from the Lord, speaking of eternal things. It speaks to us of the uncertainty of every earthly good ; it reminds us of the days wherein we shall say, "we have no pleasure in them;" and then, lest we should be too much cast down and dispirited with the melancholy truth, it sharpens our sight, till we can discern through the valley of the shadow of death, the gates of the New Jerusalem, blazing with gems, and leading into golden streets—points out our own title to the blessed inheritance, and urges us onward in our career.

Should we not listen with trust, as well as with attention, to a voice like this? Often will it come to us, when, in silence and in solitude, we open the oracles of God, and seek in prayer directions from His Holy Spirit. Oh ! these are times, when the world and the things of this world will vanish from before the face of the Christian—when heaven and earth will appear in their true light, and invested with their real value ; and who that can enjoy that inward calm produced by the Gospel, that peace that witnesseth our acceptance with God, would place his affections on the perishing things of this world? But humility, as well as attention and trust, is necessary in listening to the reproof of the Lord. What are we, that the Lord of the whole earth should take account of us? His reproofs are for our good, unworthy as we are, and are intended to lead us, through "a light affliction that is but for a moment," to "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Nor should it escape our thoughts that the Lord "will not *always* strive" with us ; there will come a time when His reproofs will cease, for "there is no repentance in the grave," but we must, after death, stand before Him again, and that at the judgment seat of Christ. Then, there will be no reproofs to the wicked, no longer any opportunity of amendment, but a certain destruction, the carrying out into execution of that "fearful waiting for of fiery indignation," which those who die in their sins shall suffer, "being reserved under chains of darkness to the coming of that day." This is the end of broken commands and neglected reproofs. Let it not be the end with us. We may resolve, and by the aid of God's Holy Spirit, execute our resolves of serving Him ; we may, before it be too late, "stand upon our watch, and set us on our tower, and watch what the Lord will say unto us, and what we shall answer when we are reproved of Him."

NOTES OF LECTURES  
ON  
PROPERTY AND PAUPERISM.  
DELIVERED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
BY THE  
REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.

LECTURE I.

THE origin of property is generally treated as a subject introductory to that of the Poor Laws. It is not essential, however, that my views of the former should be correct. Writers in general think there was a sense of justice anterior to property; but I think the contrary. Long before an individual has acquired a notion of the artificial distribution of property, there is not a stronger disposition than that of taking everything he comes into contact with, and of resenting any attempt to deprive him of it. This is seen in the infant, when its multiplied exactions are not complied with. Now this is anterior to the question of its right to what it covets. It is the part of justice to confer the latter, and to put a fence between the property of different persons. If justice interpose, it is not to deprive a man of his property—though it may prevent its unrestrained accumulation. The question of right never occurred to him; it is justice which agitates that—not to throw all into a common possession, but to set bounds to the property of each; and then his attachment is more concentrated than before on the part allotted to him. It is not to uproot the feeling of property, but to restrain it within proper bounds; and it becomes all the stronger by being more defined. Writers on jurisprudence have put forth much unsatisfactory metaphysics on the subject, and think there was a sense of justice before there was a sense of property; but I think this antedating is wrong. The feeling of property is original, and that of justice corrects it. Justice does not put the sense of property into the head; but it arbitrates between the notions of it which are in *all* heads. It does not teach those who thought they had *nothing* what is their *own*; but it teaches those who thought they had *all*, what they should concede to *other men*. It does not teach them to lay hands on that to which they thought they had *not* a right, but it defines what that is, to which they *have* a right. It is a *restrictive*, not a *dispensative* power. It limits those who would grasp and appropriate all to themselves.

On the origin of property, therefore, I shall not bewilder you with a subtle jurisprudence. It is not by a refined notion that men arrive at it; nor is it *posterior*, but *anterior* to a sense of justice. The infant feels that what it grasps is its own, as much as its fingers are its own; and that what it sees is its own, as much as its eyes are its own. By subsequent education, it perceives what in nature is different from itself; and by moral education, what is different from its own. This education does not put the idea of property into the child's head, but it takes much out of it.

The tendency in an individual to appropriate all within his reach, takes a special direction to some things more than to others; namely to those things which he sees, and is in contact with; especially if they have been enjoyed a long time. It strengthens prodigiously by possession; and we cannot analyse it, any more than the love of children, into anything simpler. And it may

be as independent of justice. If a man regards a thing as his own, he cleaves and clings to it in the same proportion as he allows property in another. He experiences a kindred feeling; he stands on the same ground, and feels the same association between the owner and his property. In proportion to his own adhesion, does he recognise adhesion in another; and in proportion to the strength of the appropriation, is the distinction between what is his, and what is another man's. A sense of justice is evolved in comparing myself with another; of which comparison infants and brute animals are incapable. If the anterior tendency be to consider it *mine*, because it is possessed by *me*, it is a subsequent feeling to consider it *his*, because it is possessed by *him*. In proportion to a man's demand that his *own* inclination should be deferred to, does he feel that the inclination of *another* should be deferred to. If I were to land on an island before undiscovered, and were to mark out a part as my own, while another did the same; the tenacity which rivetted *me* to *my* portion, would be the same as the tenacity which rivetted *him* to *his* portion; and I should judge of *his* feeling by *my own*. If each were to sit more loosely by his own, he would regard that of another more laxly; but he enters into the other's feelings, and thus each is saved from the encroachment of each. It is well that he should feel strongly his *own* right of property; for with the same strength will he feel his *neighbour's* right of property. This is a powerful instrument of justice to work by; and we should not destroy, but confine it within proper bounds. The sense of *property* attaches us to our *own*; the sense of *justice* leads us to respect that of *others*. If I resist encroachment against my own property, I do the same for that of my neighbour; and in proportion to the strength of my own attachment, I feel the justice of doing homage to his right. If I seize it with greater firmness on account of the law, my neighbour does the same. Justice does not rivet what, by the original law, was strong enough; but leads a man to abstain from violence, in order that his neighbour may retain his property.

We are apt to think this sense of property has arisen from its usefulness; but God has not left it to such a feeling. He has not left the taking of food to a sense of its usefulness, but has implanted hunger. We think what is true of the *sentient* is also true of the *moral* economy. The object is secured by special instinctive affections.

This may be well illustrated by the contests of young children, whenever there is a question about peculiar advantages. There is a progress in the sense of justice, and of property. The young child says, "It is my chair!"—because he has just sat upon it. This shows on how slight a foundation the right of property may spring up; and it is interesting to see how the usurper defers to the claim, according to his sense of justice. Suppose that the claimant had carried the chair to the fire, he would then be still more urgent in asserting his right to it; and the plea that he had carried it there, would be stronger than that he had sat upon it. It is the same with an uninhabited tract of land; and the right is strengthened by each year's labour bestowed upon it. Suppose the parent were to assign a chair to each child: it would give a right to each firmly invested little subject; and in proportion to his feeling of that right, would be his sense of the right which the others had to the same possession. Justice does not *implant* the sense of property, for the infant has that already; but it *retains* and *fixes* it.

I hold that Dr. Thomas Brown is sometimes right on this subject, but occasionally wrong. He says that justice presupposes a sense of property, and respects it; but this is not (though he says it is,) from obedience to the laws which have an evident tendency to the public good. We do not think of the public good at all. We have an appropriating feeling with respect to all that the law allows; we are aware that others feel the same; and a sense of justice, or equity, suggests that it would be as injurious for me to encroach on my neighbour, as for him to encroach on me. The law of the land shows its wisdom by quadrating its sanctions with those of natural law; and when it does not do this, much inconvenience arises. Suppose that a child had long felt a particular chair to be his: I should do wisely not to contradict



that feeling, but to add my sanction to it, by enacting that it should be his chair.

Now I would illustrate the subject in this way. Each has an affection for his own offspring; and this original attachment is strengthened by daily care. But he knows that another feels the same; and by this reciprocation of sympathies, each has a fellow feeling for each other's affections. You may say, this is strongly concentrated selfishness; but in proportion to its strength do you sympathise with the wounded affections of other men—as in the loss of a child. So far from generating a ravenous desire for another's property, it induces a stronger sense of another's right. You may say—"The love of self is wrong." But the standard of the moral law is, that you should "love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew xix. 19); and the more a man loves himself, the more will it be incumbent on him to love his neighbour—having a higher standard; and therefore it is good to graft on this feeling a love of justice.

Justice will not allow me to deprive other men of their property without their consent; and thus it is a principle more distinctly defined than gratitude or benevolence—owing to the distinct line which separates right from wrong. You may split the sum into a thousand parts,—even into farthings; and yet to take one of the latter would be just as truly a fraud, as to take the whole; nor can a man deviate one inch, without his neighbour's feeling it, and without being conscious that his foot is on a forbidden territory. But in the case of generosity, the giving of a farthing less would not be noticed. Hence justice is reckoned among the *determinate* virtues; generosity, among the *indeterminate*; and while occupied with this distinction, we may notice the difference between a duty of *perfect* and a duty of *imperfect* obligation. Its accuracy has been much questioned; but it marks a useful distinction; and we think, in opposition to Dr. Brown, that it is sound and right. Justice is a virtue of *perfect*, and benevolence is a virtue of *imperfect* obligation. The "*determinate*" quadrate generally, with the "*perfect*;" but they rest on different grounds. To an obligation on the one side, there may be a counterpart right on the other; and this is a virtue of perfect obligation. In another case there may be propriety and virtue in the usage;—nay, a man may be a monster not to do it; yet, as there is no right on the other side, it is a virtue of imperfect obligation. Thus more enters into the distinction than its merely being determinate or not. There may be an obligation to be beneficent to a beggar; but there is no right on *his* part. It may be right to forgive an offender; yet he may have no right to be forgiven; for if he had, there would be nothing to forgive. However antiquated and scholastic may be the language, therefore, the distinction itself is just and proper.

It is not because the law says an estate is his, that the owner feels such to be the case. He felt it before. The largeness of the property is of no consequence;—any more than the largeness of a family with regard to the affection of a father for his children. Each experiences the same feeling, and defers to it in another. The man of a thousand acres does not dispute the possession of the feeling by him who has only a hundred;—anymore than the father of ten children disputes the affection of the father of one. Both in the case of property and of children, God has not left this attachment to the caprice of men; but has implanted it, as an original feeling, in the breast of each.

## TEMPTING CHRIST.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. HENRY MELVILL, B.D.

PREACHED IN CAMDEN CHURCH, CAMBERWELL,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 11, 1847.

Before making a collection in behalf of the District Schools.

*"Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents."*—1 Corinthians x. 9.

You will observe, that throughout the chapter from which our text is taken, the apostle has been referring to different parts in the history of the Israelites, and extracting from them warnings to the Corinthians to whom he was writing. In a verse succeeding our text, he delivers this general decision in regard of the events to which he had alluded :—"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples : and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." This at once establishes the typical character of the history of the Jews, and warrants our regarding their history as shadowing out and prefiguring that of the Christian. And this general truth it is, that the apostle illustrates in sundry particular instances, warning us by what befel the Israelites in consequence of certain sins, of the importance that those sins should be carefully shunned. It is thus that he introduces our text. He wishes to warn the church against tempting God, and therefore he refers to a passage in the Jewish annals, in which the tempting of God provoked a fearful visitation.

We will, therefore, apply ourselves at once to the topics of discourse suggested by these words. And these, we think, are three ; the first, the tempting of God, by the Israelites ; the second, how in tempting God, they could be said to tempt Christ ; the third and last, how we may imitate them in tempting, and what doom we must expect if we do.

I. Now the apostle evidently refers to that very memorable portion of the history of the Israelites, where it is related how "the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, so that great numbers of them died." It was in consequence of their manifesting extreme discontent, that God was provoked to the bringing on them this sore judgment. And this discontent was produced by several causes, for we read that "the people were much discouraged because of the way," and moreover, that they "spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness ? for there is no bread, neither is there any water ; and our soul loatheth this light bread." They were disheartened, you see, by the constant difficulties which they had to encounter in making their way through the wilderness. There appears also to have been a suspension of that miraculous supply of water which had long been vouchsafed ; and, besides, the manna had grown distasteful, so

that, if there were a sufficiency of food, it was such as they would no longer relish. As soon as they had broken out into fretful expressions on these several accounts, we read of God's sending among them "fiery serpents,"—no comment being offered on the crime which they had committed, except in the recorded punishment which it quickly provoked. But this must have been the crime to which St. Paul refers in our text, and which he calls the tempting of Christ; for his subjoining "and were destroyed of serpents," sufficiently defines the particular circumstance which he had in his thoughts. We know of no other occasion on which the Israelites were "destroyed of serpents," and we have, therefore, full warrant for concluding that the tempting of God, of which he accuses them, was by and through that vehement discontent, of which we have just given you the inspired account.

Here, then, comes the question as to the propriety of saying that God was tempted by the murmurers, or as to the sense in which such an expression is used by the apostle. We know, that although "God cannot be tempted with evil," He may justly be said to be tempted, whensoever men, by being dissatisfied with His dealings, virtually ask that He will alter those dealings, and proceed in a way more congenial with their feelings. If you reflect a little, you can hardly fail to perceive, that in a very strict sense, this and the like may be said to be a tempting of God. Suppose a man to be discontented with the appointments of Providence; suppose him to murmur and repine at what the Almighty allots him to do or to bear:—is he not to be charged with provoking God to change His purposes? and what is this if it be not "tempting" God—a striving to induce Him to swerve from His plans, though every one of those plans have been settled by infinite wisdom? Or, again, if any one of us, notwithstanding multiplied proofs of the Divine lovingkindness, doubt or question whether God do indeed love him; of what is he guilty, if not of tempting the Lord, seeing that he solicits God to give additional evidence, as though there were deficiency, and challenges Him to fresh demonstrations of what He has already abundantly displayed? This would be called "tempting" amongst men. If a child were to show by his actions that he doubted or disbelieved the affection of his parents, he would be considered as thereby striving to extort from them fresh proofs of that affection, though they had already done as much as either in justice or in wisdom they ought to have done; this would be a clear tempting of them, and that too in the ordinary sense of the term. In short, unbelief of every kind and degree may be said to be a tempting of God; for not to believe on the evidence which He has seen fit to give, is to tempt Him to give more than He has already given—offering our possible assent, if proof were increased, as an inducement to Him to go beyond what His wisdom has prescribed.

And if in this and the like senses God may be tempted, what can be more truly said of the Israelites, than that they "tempted" God in the wilderness? Was there ever a people for whom so much had been done, on whose behalf so many miracles had been wrought, or for whose protection there had been such signal displays of Omnipotence? Witness the plagues which had laid Egypt waste, because Pharaoh would not suffer them to depart from his land; witness the dividing of the Red Sea's waters, that a passage might be made for their hosts, and destruction overwhelm their enemies; witness the pillar of fire and of cloud, which mysteriously led them in their wanderings; witness the bread which fell from heaven, to sustain them in the midst of the desert; witness the water which had leapt from the rock, and tracked them as a sparkling river in all their dreary marches; witness, moreover, the awful disclosures of Godhead, when with thunderings and with lightnings the law was given from Sinai, and the nation brought into actual covenant with Jehovah. It would seem almost impossible, if it were not that the inspired history assures us of the fact, that a people so girt round with the presence of Deity, and so privileged with manifestations of His favour, should have been perplexed by every fresh difficulty, terrified at every new trial, and disposed, not merely to distrust, but literally to reproach God, at the least appearance of danger; and what is to be said of this their perpetual disposition to murmur and distrust, if not that it virtually

accused God of unfaithfulness, and challenged Him to do yet greater things, if He would have His people confide in His protection? Every expression of fear, every syllable of repining, involved an impeachment of His dealings, and virtually told Him that His promises were not to be relied upon, however solemnly made, and however heretofore steadily accomplished. In shrinking or murmuring at every peril or hardship, the Jews made light of all past interferences, practically denying that their deliverance out of Egypt, or the supplies of miraculous sustenance gave evidence of the guardianship of an almighty Protector. And was not this a high crime, one which well deserved such a judgment as that of the "fiery serpents?" Indeed, men and brethren, we are, perhaps, not accustomed to think of unbelief or murmuring as nothing less than a tempting of the Lord, and therefore we fail to attach to it a common and just degree of heinousness. It is so natural in us to be discontented whenever God's dealings are not just what we like, to be impatient and fretful under every new cross, that we are scarcely conscious of committing a sin, and much less one more than usually aggravated. Yet we cannot be dissatisfied with God's dealings, and not be verily guilty of tempting God. Yes, of tempting God! It seems a harsh definition of a slight, and scarcely avoidable fault; but nevertheless it is a true definition. You cannot distrust God, and not accuse Him of a want either of power or of goodness; you cannot repine—no, not even in thought—without virtually telling Him that His plans are not the best, nor His dispensations the wisest, which might have been appointed in respect of yourselves. So that your fear, or your despondency, or your anxiety, in circumstances of perplexity, or of peril, is nothing less than a call upon God to depart from His fixed course—a suspicion, or rather an assertion, that He might proceed in a manner more worthy of Himself, and therefore a challenge to Him to alter His dealings, if He would prove that He possesses the attributes which He claims. You may not intend thus to accuse, or provoke God, whenever you murmur; but your murmuring does all this, and cannot fail to do it. You cannot be dissatisfied, without virtually saying that God might order things better; you cannot say that He might order things better, without virtually demanding that He change His course of acting, and give other proofs of His infinite perfections. And thus you tempt Him, tempt Him even as did the Israelites in the wilderness. It is a great sin which you may thus almost inadvertently commit; for by tempting God, according to the definition we have given to the words, and in the modes which we have marked out, not only is it very possible, but it is even common, to throw doubt on the attributes of the Most High—to threaten to deny them, unless exhibited in a manner more pleasing to ourselves. Let us be warned by the fate of the Israelites, to struggle against every kind and degree of discontent and unbelief; and amid all the difficulties we may have to encounter, to hold fast the truth, that God is faithful to His word, and does all things for the best; for, though we may not proceed to the same lengths as the people of Israel, we may display the very same temper—a temper which must break forth into equal excess, were we exposed to equal trial. And forasmuch as it is at the heart that God looks, He may consider Himself as much tempted by the secret doubts and silent misgivings—to say nothing of open discontent—as by the reproaches and upbraidings and denials of those who provoked Him, and perished in the wilderness; and therefore may it come to pass, that He may be at length moved to the bringing upon us, as upon the murmurers of old, fearful proofs of His righteous indignation; and we may fall beneath His vengeance, through not hearkening to the admonition given to His once faithful people—"Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents."

II. But we must now proceed to notice, what must all along have struck you as a great peculiarity in the text, that it is Christ, and not God, whom the Israelites are said to have tempted. The apostle is speaking of events which occurred long before the incarnation, when God had not been manifested in the flesh, and the mysteries of redemption were shadowed only in prophecy and in type.

You never read, distinctly and by name, of Christ in the Old Testament, though there are unnumbered passages in which, now that they can be read by the light of the New, you find Him who was to be born "in the fulness of time"—that "seed of the woman" promised so soon as man had transgressed, though not to enter upon His mediatorial work, till after a long period of introductory dispensation. And it seems to us, that unless you fully admit the divinity of the Redeemer, and therefore His pre-existence as a Person of the Godhead, it will be impossible to offer any satisfactory account of His having been tempted centuries before He appeared upon earth. We see not how, by any figure or license of speech, a Being who had then no being, who did not begin to be till many ages after, could be spoken of as tempted by those murmurings of the Israelites which caused the plague of the fiery serpents. He must have existed at the time of the murmuring, and the murmuring must have been directed against Him; otherwise it could not, we think, be in any sense true that He had been tempted by the discontented Israelites. And not only does this assertion of St. Paul go to the establishing the pre-existence of Christ; it goes also to the establishing His actual Divinity; for it was "against the Lord" that "the people murmured"—"against the Lord and against Moses;" and unless, therefore, Christ is the Lord, with what truth can it be affirmed, that they murmured against Christ? There is a yet more remarkable instance in the epistle to the Hebrews, of this speaking of the existence of Christ, long before He was born in Bethlehem of Judea. We will refer to it for a few moments, as it may help us to illustrate the statement of the text. We allude to what is said of Moses, that "he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt;" "the reproach of Christ," or, as it may more strictly be rendered, "reproach *for* Christ," reproach on account of Christ.

Now we are quite free to own, that at first sight it is almost startling thus to read of Christ in a record of distant days, and to find that a God-fearing man, exposed to persecution, at a period when as yet there was no explicit revelation of a Saviour, could be said, just as it could be said had he lived in our own age of the world, to have borne that Saviour's "reproach." With what justice can it be affirmed, whatever the reproaches which fell upon Moses, that he was reproached for, or on account of, Christ, living, as this leader did, when the world around him must have been ignorant of the very name of the Redeemer? How can it hold good, fierce as may have been the calumny which his conduct provoked, that it was hatred to the Redeemer which animated his revilers? Of course we cannot go at length into all the answers which might be given to these questions; but there is one reason to which, because equally holding good in the case of our text, we would direct your most earnest attention. We know, that since the fall of man, there has been going forward upon this earth a mighty contest between evil and good. We are ignorant whether there be any other arena in the universe, on which meet the powers of light and darkness, and measure their strength; but that our world is a battle-field where Satan carries on his war against God,—we are as certain of this as if it were attested by our bodily senses. And we may yet further be certain, that apostate angels had from the beginning one definite object of assault, and that, wasting not their energies in vague, vain, and desultory efforts, they concentrated their might against the Anointed of the Lord. We should think, so soon as the acute and subtle serpent had heard that the seed of the woman should bruise his head, that if man extracted consolation from this first mention of the Redeemer, the devil would derive information as to the object against which all his efforts should be turned. We cannot well question, that, informed as Satan was, immediately after his success over our first parents, that a Man should arise to repair the breach in creation, all his after plans would have reference to this promised Deliverer, and that the whole of his strength and intelligence would be given to an attempted frustration of God's scheme for restoring the fallen. We consider it, therefore, as a statement which will bear the most rigorous test, that ever after man apostatised, Christ was the grand object of the devil's attack. He

had so far prevailed as to have effected the ruin of this creation, and all that now remained was to prevent its restoration. He had nothing, therefore, further to do with an assault upon man; man, in all his generations, had become hopelessly his prey; his only concern was to prevent interference with his conquest, and therefore his object would be to wrestle with the Being who should arise as man's advocate. Hence, from the moment of his victory over the first Adam, he brought to bear all his fury upon the second Adam; and when he beheld the selection of a family, and perceived the travelling down of the promise from Abraham to his children, he might have learned, that if he would defeat the promised Deliverer, he must overthrow and keep under the chosen Israelites. Henceforward, therefore, he fought against Christ, by fighting against the Israelites. He spared no pains to root out and sweep away the nation which was to give birth to the Redeemer, and to bring about such a state of things that God might be provoked to abandon the purpose which He had long since announced; but whether it be in weaving a temporal calamity to the Israelites, or in moving them to rebellion and idolatry, the object at which his shafts were aimed was the promised "seed of the woman," and the blow was intended for Christ, when it descended upon those "of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came." And if this be a correct account of the machinations of the evil one, then we must conclude that Christ was persecuted in the persecution of Moses, and tempted through the murmuring of the Israelites. "The reproaches" which fell upon Moses, were virtually designed and directed against Christ; Christ was the real object of the devil's hostility, and Moses was assailed only because he served as an instrument in God's hand for preparing Christ's way. We very much wish to press home upon you this view of the matter, for it is perhaps, after all, the most important which can be presented. I know not, when I look out on the splendid retinue of worlds, woven like a diadem over the forehead of Deity, whether there be one in all the brilliant assemblage whose surface has been polluted by the foot of the enemy; I know indeed, that notwithstanding the deep stillness attending the march of every star, there may possibly be discord and tumult in every one of its circles—for if it were in God's immediate presence that the first rebellion arose, what spot can be pronounced too holy or too lovely to have harboured a traitor against the Most High? It may be, then, that Satan and his angels have seduced other worlds from their loyalty—it may be, that the harps, from which sweep nothing but the melody of the Creator's praise, may be out of tune in other worlds as well as in our own, and that there is withheld, in other regions of the universe, that anthem which should roll unbroken from every sphere and every tongue; but at least we know of one broken string—at least we know of one province of God's empire, in which apostate angels have won themselves a footing, and where there goes forward, day by day and moment by moment, a high contest between evil and good. And what we wish especially imprinted upon your minds is, that as from the very beginning Satan has been the great champion of evil, so has Christ been the great champion of good. We wish you to observe, that as man, so soon as he had fallen, was taught to expect an advocate, so was Satan taught to expect an antagonist. And it was not with man that he afterwards fought; the instant he had vanquished Adam, he began to fight with Christ. If no Christ had been promised to man, and threatened to Satan, Satan might have left the world to itself, secure that by no other interference, and by no struggle of its own, could it be wrenched from his supremacy; but he had heard of "the seed of the woman,"—enough of redemption had been disclosed to alarm him for his conquest; and therefore did he combine all the intelligence and all the sinew of his apostate company on the one work of opposing Christ: Christ was to be opposed through Moses His type, both as a prophet and a leader; and thus the battle was with Christ, and "the reproach" was upon Christ; so that if Moses had turned away recusantly from the path of duty, it would have been literally "the reproach of Christ" which he declined, whilst, on the other hand, embracing reproach as a precious and a blessed thing, it was literally "the reproach of Christ," which he "esteemed

greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." And in like manner there might be (as there was) great murmuring against Moses; but this murmuring, so far as it was caused by the machinations of Satan for the injury of the Israelites, was nothing less than a murmuring against Christ. And when, over and above the fact of Christ's essential Deity—a fact which requires us to suppose Him to have been present with the Israelites in all their wanderings, and forsaken by them in all their apostacies—when we consider this Mediator as having been all along the object of Satanic attack, so that it was Christ only whom fallen angels tempted, when stirring up a spirit of rebellion and discontent—you can have no difficulty in understanding why St. Paul associates the name of the Redeemer with the early Jewish story, or why, in founding an admonition on the doom of those who murmured in the wilderness, he has thrown it into the very peculiar form—"Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents."

III. Having thus been brought to the speaking specially of the tempting of Christ, we have to examine, in the third place, how we may imitate the sin of the Israelites, and what doom we must expect if we do. Now let it be observed at once, that if even the Israelites, favoured only with dim and figurative notices of a Mediator, could be charged with tempting Christ, and were exposed in consequence to the fierce wrath of God, far easier must it be for ourselves, on whom the clear light shineth, to commit the like sin, and more signal must be the vengeance which we ought to expect. We have already spoken at some length on the modes in which we may tempt God; but it is now in His mediatorial, rather than in His divine capacity, that we wish to show you how Christ may be tempted. There is a great general similarity between the two cases, for in both the supreme Being is tempted, if we practically undervalue what He has done for us, throw scorn on the proofs which He has already given of His love, and thus virtually provoke Him to do more or give greater. Ah! men and brethren, this may be putting neglect of Christ and His Gospel under an unusual aspect, but prove to us, if you can, that it is not a just one. We affirm that by every refusal to turn from your sins, and to seek that repentance and remission which Christ died to procure and lives to bestow, you are as literally guilty of tempting Christ as were the Israelites in the desert, when they provoked God by their repinings and unbelief. The Israelites virtually said that God had not done enough for them—that He must do greater things still, ere they would give Him their allegiance, their confidence, their love; and is not this precisely what you also say to Christ, when you are not to be moved by all the mysteries of mercy, His incarnation, His passion, His death, His intercession, to the giving heed to the Gospel and closing with its proffers? Wherein lies the difference, if God be tempted when we are discontented with his dealings, and thus show that unless He change His plans, we are not ready to confide in His Word? Surely Christ is tempted, when we are neglectful of His offers, and thus show that unless He make yet greater efforts, He will not succeed in winning us to His service. Undoubtedly we provoke, we challenge Him to do more, by putting contempt on what He has done; and this contempt we virtually, nay, we literally put, when we prove that what He has done is insufficient to overcome our unbelief. So that you tempt Christ every time you reject Him as your Saviour, every time He knocks at the door of your heart, through the ministrations of the Word, and you give Him not admission; you tempt Him precisely in the sense in which the Israelites tempted God—by practically denying that what has been done on your behalf should bind you to His service, and thereby practically demanding that He interpose yet again, with mightier tokens of supremacy and of compassion. And how little had been done for the Israelites by God, in comparison with what has been done by Christ Jesus for us! It was much that God had wrenched from the neck of a captive people the yoke of an oppressor—it was much that by plague and prodigy the Egyptians had been discomfited; but what is this to death vanquished, the grave rifled, and heaven

opened, by the conquests and triumphs of the Mediator? God gave his people manna from heaven; but what is this to Christ's giving the true bread of His own flesh, for the life of the world? The rock was smitten, and water gushed out; but what is this to Christ's having been pierced, that a fountain might be opened for all sin and uncleanness? The tabernacle was set up, and Aaron, with the Urim and Thummim on his breast, could intercede with God, and gain oracular response; but what is this to our having a High Priest within the veil, ever living to plead, and having at His disposal all the gifts of the Spirit? Ay, if it showed great hardness of heart, great ingratitude, great insensibility, great perverseness, that men who had seen waters turned into blood, and a sea divided, and food brought in profusion by the stretching forth of the rod of the lawgiver, should have been fretful and impatient and distrustful at every new trial, what is evidenced by our conduct, if we continue the careless and the unbelieving—we before whose eyes Christ Jesus is evidently “set forth crucified among us,” fastened to that cross on which (oh! more potent than the rod of Moses!) were nailed principalities and powers, before which idolatry hath already shrunk and its yoke shall yet finally crumble into nothingness, that cross which has only to be viewed over a land, and moral darkness vanishes—over the grave, and the dust of ages is reanimated! I dare no longer parallel that tempting of God with which the Israelites may be charged, with that tempting of Christ of which numbers among ourselves are constantly guilty. It were to say that nothing more stupendous, nothing more glorious has been revealed unto us than was revealed in the peril which dismayed the Egyptians, or in the thunders which shook Mount Sinai to its base; it were to say that a temporal deliverer and a temporal Canaan give as great evidence of the love of the Almighty towards men, and of infinite power being engaged in their succour, as redemption from everlasting death and “an inheritance that fadeth not away.” Oh! no; there is sameness in the mode of temptation, but there is a vast difference in the degree of guiltiness; and if the Israelites were terribly visited, “how,” then, “shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”

And fiery serpents swarmed amongst the murmurers. It was a strange, but very significant punishment. The serpent had been the first tempter, and ever after might be regarded as the emblem of Satan. What, then, was taught, when by tempting God the Israelites brought the serpents upon them, if not that to distrust God is to give oneself up to the power of the evil one, and that the moment we cease to have confidence in our heavenly Father, and dare to arraign the wisdom or the goodness of His dealings, we expose ourselves to the assaults of a malignant legion of spirits, that “kept not their first estate,” and who are ever on the watch to do us evil and to sting us? What, moreover, was taught if, as we doubt not, the occurrence were typical, if our tempting of Christ were figured by that of the Israelites—what but that there is no alternative to our rejecting the Saviour but our being a prey to the devil? Tempt Him we may, but He will not be moved to the doing more than He has done on our behalf; no new evidence shall be given of Christianity; no fresh miracles shall be wrought to compel our assent; no awful meteors, no burning pomp, no portentous voice, shall shame us into belief. Tempt Him we may, by withstanding His Spirit, and thus asking some extraordinary agency, to force us from our sin; tempt Him we may, by presuming on His long-suffering, and thus demanding that He permit us to continue yet a little while in our sins;—but no new engine shall be brought to bear upon us, and the limits of His patience shall be placed by other attributes, and not by our desires. Tempt Him we may, and, nevertheless, He is not to be tempted; we can commit the sin, but we cannot turn the sin to advantage. And what will follow from our continuing to tempt the Redeemer?—(and thou dost tempt Him, man of pleasure! who hast no care for the soul which He purchased with His blood; thou dost tempt Him, man of business! who wouldst defer providing for eternity till thou hast made a larger provision for time; thou dost tempt Him, self-righteous man! who thinkest thou canst add something to His all-perfect merits:.)—what will follow from our



continuing to tempt the Redeemer, except that the serpents of fire will be upon us? We shall be given over to our own depraved lusts, and those malignant spirits, which have always been lurking as adders in our path, or hovering around us, to stir up our evil passions, shall seize upon us as their lawful victims, and fill our veins with that burning poison, for which we may seek, but never find an antidote through all eternity. We shrink from the expression—"serpents of fire." "Serpents"—maligning, insinuating, deadly things—the chosen shape in which the great Apollyon blighted Paradise, and destroyed our race: "serpents of fire;" fire, which even the Almighty takes as His emblem, when He would declare Himself terrible. "For our God is a consuming fire." It is, we say, so fearful an expression, that the image might fill us with despair, if we had never heard of the brazen serpent, and never read that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so has the Son of man been lifted up," that "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here, however, is our refuge, here is our hope—we need not perish. "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," are the gracious words which yet proceed from Him whom we have so long tempted, but who is still ready to "blot out our transgressions as a cloud, and as a thick cloud our sins." The dying Israelite turned his eyes towards the brazen serpent, and presently felt himself made whole. Oh! dying sinner! "behold" thou "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Tempt Him no longer. Marvellous forbearance, that thou hast been suffered to tempt Him so long! Able to save thee, willing to save thee, wilt thou not allow Him to save thee? I dare promise you pardon, I dare promise you peace, I dare promise you a glorious immortality, if you will turn unto Him who died that you might live. The fiery sword of the cherub shall no longer repel you from the tree of life; serpents of fire shall have no power to harm you; and the chariots of fire and the horses of fire shall at length convey you into the presence of the Lord God Almighty.

Convey *you*! Yes, but you would not go alone. Heaven is an ample place; there is room for the old, there is room for the young; and you would not go alone—I know you would not. I know your zeal for the instruction of the poor who are around you; I know how you build and support schools; and it will be enough for me to remind you that those schools now solicit your annual bounty, and require your most liberal contributions. Great things have been done in regard to the schools, since I had the charge of this district. I rejoice in their progress; I rejoice to find your arrangements for the instruction of the poor better than I left them. You have raised far more commodious schools, and the expence of the erection may, I am told, be considered as defrayed. But the annual outgoings are necessarily increased. What then? You will increase your contributions; more of you will become annual subscribers—for annual subscribers are the strength of an institution. You are not a people to provide room for more scholars, and then withhold the requisite funds, without which more scholars cannot be received.

What, then, have I further to say, except once more to warn you, that ye tempt not Christ. Tempt Him not by practically denying or mistrusting His Word, when He bids you "suffer little children to come unto Him." Alas! the serpents are already upon these children,—"*born in sin, and shapen in iniquity.*" But bring them to Christ; teach them to know Christ, who hath trodden the "old serpent" under foot; and they may grow up to wrestle with "the world, the flesh, and the devil;" to be "more than conquerors;" to "fight" with you "the good fight of faith," and to share with you the crown of immortality.

## THE PRESENT CONDEMNATION OF THE UNBELIEVER.

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### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. GEORGE FISK, LL.B.

PREACHED IN CHRIST CHAPEL, MAIDA HILL,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, MARCH 28, 1847.

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*"For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."*—John iii. 17, 18.

I HAVE already discoursed on the foregoing part of this text; and the second clause of the eighteenth verse now claims our attention; "He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God."

We have already seen that the provisions of God's mercy, in the Gospel of His dear Son, have been co-extensive with the necessity of man's case; that the purpose of God was to put salvation within the reach of whosoever would accept it; that God has not dealt out mercy with a sparing hand, but has opened abundantly its vast treasury; that there is not a guilty soul under the wide canopy of heaven, that may not (if he will) obtain salvation in Christ Jesus. And now the truth, the awful and weighty truth, which claims our attention, is that those who accept not, as God would have them accept, the provisions of His mercy, perish simply because they reject those provisions.

Now in discussing this subject, dear brethren, relying on the teaching and guidance, and seeking the unction of God the Holy Ghost upon us, I would first lead you to consider, that every unbelieving soul is in a positive state of condemnation in the sight of God. Notwithstanding all the mercy that has been poured forth, notwithstanding the humiliation unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ, notwithstanding the free publication of the Gospel of our common salvation, the unbelieving soul is under condemnation. "He that believeth is not condemned;" "he that believeth not, is condemned already."

This, dear brethren, is a very comprehensive statement. You observe, it does not affirm that the open profligate, that the hardened sinner, that the audacious subject of Satan alone is under condemnation—but "he that believeth not;" and "whosoever" is the best exponent of the pronoun there: "*whosoever* believeth not," is under condemnation. This sounds like a hard saying to the moral and excellent of the earth, according to the estimate of man. It seems a hard saying to utter, and to force upon the attention of any whose lives are free from reproach, who fill their position in society with credit, and meet the various claims of duty with moral integrity: it seems hard to tell them that with all their moral virtues in full play, yet while they do not "believe the record which God hath given of His Son," they are under condemnation. But the truth is, that with all their moral excellencies, they are alienated from God. The stain of sin is upon them, and their reconciliation

has not been effected. God has proposed the treaty ; they have not affixed their signature, nor given their assent to it. They are living according to the best form of "the course of this world ;" they are living in the most harmless manner they can live, "without God in the world." Their plans are undertaken, their pursuits are entered upon, their engagements are met, without any reference to God ; and so long as they can retain their position with credit among men, so long as they can receive the meed which they desire of human applause, so long as they can retain the character of being reproachless individuals, so long as they can receive the prize which men are wont to award to moral excellence, they are content. We do not complain, be it remembered—we rather thank God that they are not quite "as other men are ;" but still we hold fast to the words of our text—"He that believeth not, is condemned already." It does, we confess, dear brethren, sound like a hard and a harsh and a most illiberal saying ; but we must utter it—we dare not keep it back. Every man who accepts not God's terms, remains before God in the natural state in which his birth, as a child of the fallen Adam, placed him ; and the result of this must be, if unremedied, the total loss and shipwreck of the soul, with all its weight of eternal interests.

We dwell not upon this subject ; we rather leave it before you, with all the simplicity of statement which you find about it in the text. We admit not of argumentation about it—we admit not the consideration of anything that should soften it down, and make it more palatable, to meet the inclinations and the feelings and the tendencies of the human mind : it is written with the finger of God, that "he that believeth not, is condemned already." The law's claims, in reference to him, are unsatisfied ; the law's penalties, in reference to him, are unmet ; the satisfaction of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is tendered for the benefit of all, up to the present moment, has not been availed of ; the gulf of separation, which lay between the unpardoned sinner and God, lies there still ; and access to God in any other way than that of faith in Christ Jesus, is utterly hopeless—it lies not within the range of possibility. Then, dear brethren, it follows, that unbelief is the master sin, which destroys the soul of man.

And here it is very important that our statements should be most carefully and exactly made. "All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." To what end ? That we might never bear it. With what ultimate view ? That God might be glorified in the triumph of His grace over the guilty and rebellious nature of man. Then has Jesus borne my sins ? He has ; and if the question were repeated by each individual now listening to these truths, our answer would be the same. The sin of the guiltiest being in this congregation was laid upon Jesus, simply that it might not rest upon the guilty sinner, and that God might therefore be glorified, in the individual salvation of each one of you. "He that believeth not, is condemned already, *because he hath not believed.*" It is not said—"He is condemned already, because he is a sinner, because he has violated the whole law, because he has stood forth, with a traitor's front, against the majesty of Jehovah ;" it is not said—"He is condemned already, because he has a corrupt nature, because in his first parent he has fallen, and because his whole life has been the history of sad and daring hostilities against God ;" but the word of the text is—"He is condemned already, because he hath not believed." Dear brethren, the truth is this : all sin, of whatever kind, and characterised by whatever atrocity, is susceptible of pardon ; moreover, pardon is freely tendered in the Gospel, through Jesus Christ, to every kind of sinner and to every kind of sin. Take that precious Word, which breaks like a light from heaven upon our fallen and guilty world, in the first chapter of the first epistle of John, where the apostle says, at the seventh verse—"If we walk in the light, as Jesus is in the light"—or, in other words, if we walk in the truth, as Jesus is in the truth, and is the truth—"we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Were you to present before me the greatest accumulation of atrocious iniquity resting upon any one individual, with an awakened conscience testifying to every item in the black catalogue,—yet without hesitation, without a faltering lip, I would utter

to him for his comfort—The blood of Jesus Christ is all-sufficient to cleanse away every particle of the guilt that is upon your soul ; and so soon as the faith, which is of God's giving, shall lay its hand upon the victim, upon " the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," the guilt is removed, the penalty connected with sin is for ever set aside, the hindrances which kept the sinner from God are removed, the gulf of separation is filled up by the blood of the Lamb, and there is access with boldness and confidence, yet with humiliation, into the very presence of God, as a God already reconciled, as a " God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." Then, dear brethren, it follows, that while unbelief assumes and keeps the mastery of the heart, there is no forgiveness for it ; it is the great sin, which keeps other sins unpardoned—out of the reach of " the blood which cleanseth ;" and simply because it does so, it becomes the grand obstacle which lies between God reconciled, and the sinner unsubdued.

Unbelief becomes, then, in regard to God, as well as to the sinner, a fearful sin. It is a sin of great atrocity with regard to God, and the honour of God, while it is a sin pregnant with the most fearful danger, in reference (as we have seen) to the sinner himself. Unbelief, dear brethren, is entirely contrary to the revealed will of God, to the commands of God, to the whole plan of God in reference to our salvation. It is as much a matter of command on the part of God, that we believe in Him whom He hath sent, as is any one of the commandments in the decalogue. I am as much bound to believe in Jesus, whom He has sent, as I am bound not to kill ; I am as much bound to believe in Him, as I am bound not to worship idols ; I am as much bound to believe in Him, as I am bound to cultivate the " love," which " is the fulfilling of the law ;" and I am as guilty in not believing in Him, as if I broke the whole of the two tables. And if it were possible that I could present to God a continuous, an entire, an unbroken obedience to the whole decalogue, yet so long as I remained guilty of the sin of unbelief, I should stand chargeable in His sight with the breach of the whole law. Dear brethren, the believing of that which was not true concerning God was the cause of man's fall ; the believing of the delusion of Satan, and the disbelieving of the truth of God, encompass man within those bonds which fetter and which bind him, and press him down (as it were) to the depths of perdition.

Unbelief, then, opposes itself to the dignity of God. It makes its surmises against the truth of God ; it seems to build itself upon an unworthy supposition, that all which God has revealed, in reference to our salvation, may not be true, or may not be true in reference to us. Let the same conduct be pursued on the part of a child towards its parent, or on the part of a subject towards his sovereign, and at once we see that the disbelieving child dishonours the parent, by the very suspicion which is implied in unbelief, and that the subject presents the idea of latent treason, as engendered by his unworthy suspicion of the sovereign. But not only so—the unbelief which acts upon the heart of man, till it is subdued, practically rejects all the full provisions of the Gospel—all the light, all the truth, all the wondrous mechanism (so to speak), by which God has made His mercy known, and made it tell upon the population of this fallen earth. This unbelief, while it is master in the mind, stands up in resistance to the operations of that Spirit of God, which would first lead a sinner to the mirror of God's Word, where God, in all the tenderness of His paternity, is reflected ; and thus, while unbelief holds off the sinner from Christ, and the revelation He has given, all the provisions of the Gospel fail in their effect ; though " mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other"—though heaven and earth have met (as it were) in adjustment, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ—yet all the penal consequences of sin remain, and unbelief keeps the poor guilty sinner unshielded, a prey to every evil influence, a sad apostate and alien from the family of God.

Now unbelief, dear brethren, assumes three principal forms.

There is the unbelief of infidelity, in the midst of proofs unanswerable. With all the purblind impotency of this world's wisdom, the infidel gazes (as

it were), on the bright firmament of Divine truth, where the brightness of God shines forth, like the stars of heaven; but still he inquires—'Where is God?' In the depth he cannot find Him; he gazes into the height,—He is not there; into the length and the breadth,—but he sees not God. Though the living voice of God sounds in his ears; though the glowing page sparkles with the lustre of God, and of God in Christ, when he gazes upon it; though God has spoken of all things pertaining to His majesty, and glory, and mercy, and truth, that a creature can need to hear; though God (as it were) has put His bow in the heavens, that the guiltiest sinner may gaze upon it in hope: yet he sees it not. God seems so far distant from him that he cannot contemplate Him, except under the idea of some vague abstraction—not as a God near at hand—not as a God "about his path, and about his bed, and that spieth out all his ways"—not as a God arrayed with all a Father's tenderness and compassion. No, he is a stranger to God; and though God's own light breaks upon him, though God's own truth, like a well-spring of life, flows unto him, he is without God, and his heart and his intellect become daily more and more contracted within themselves; and the greyheaded infidel becomes far more impracticable than the audacious young unbeliever, who first held his heart against God, and refused to open it to the sweet influence of Almighty grace.

Then there is the infidelity of ignorance, amidst all the means of grace. Ah! beloved, one of the most awful features of society in the present day is this—that means of grace abound; the preached Word is boldly and faithfully and affectionately preached, none daring (thank God!) to hinder us, or make us afraid; the written Word is circulated without restraint and without hindrance, so far as to meet almost the whole amount of our home necessity; and yet the great mass of all classes, not excepting any of the most elevated or the most humble—the great mass is yet unchristian, or merely nominally Christian, having a "name to live," but being positively dead in trespasses and in sins," untaught and uninfluenced by Divine knowledge, altogether without a clear acquaintance with the object on which faith should rest, without any simple intelligence of the wondrous plan of redemption through Christ Jesus. Not that the name of Jesus is a strange name—not that it is a name without some idea corresponding to it; but they have no more intelligent idea of Jesus, in His relation to a sinner's hopes, and to God's mercy extended to sinners, than is entertained of any heathen deity, of the basest mythology that the imagination of man ever conceived.

Then unbelief assumes another form: there is the unbelief, or infidelity, (for it comes to the same thing,) of self-righteousness and unconcern. And here we find a large class of the human family—men who when admonished on the subject of sin, when told that they are altogether at enmity with God, will tell us of the excellency of their hearts, of the rectitude of their intentions, of their great worth, of their estimable qualities; or at least, if they will not do this, they will say—'We are not worse than others; why draw before us extreme views of the danger of sin? Let us be content with moderation in these matters; let us do as well as we can, and be as well as we can, and God is very merciful, and will not bring us to too strict an account.' Ah! sad delusion of Satan! And yet millions receive it; and when the tender is made to them of everlasting life in Christ Jesus, they feel not the want of it, they know not how precious it is; they let the stream of life flow bright and sparkling by them, and unbelief keeps the soul fruitless—a miserable abortion from everything except evil, in the sight of a heart-searching God.

Dear brethren, under one or other of these forms of unbelief, we fear we must class a vast majority of the intelligent, thinking, and reflecting of the children of men; and we dare not withdraw the statement of our text—"He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed." For the truth is, that the provisions of mercy are to be received only through the actings of that simple faith which is of God's giving; and so long as unbelief usurps the possession of the heart, it cuts off all that provision of fulness which is in Christ Jesus, and leaves the leper with the leprosy of his sin, in all its loathsome reality, upon him, while the precious blood of cleansing has been

shed, and is day by day being tendered to him in vain. Ah! dear brethren, surely the extremity of the bitter pang, which a lost soul will experience, will be this—the consciousness that throughout the whole course of his life on earth, freedom from condemnation was offered to him by the free grace of God in Christ, announced in the written Word, and heralded and proclaimed in his ears by the faithful minister of the truth; and that all the blessedness of heaven has been lost, and all the pangs of hell (as it were) rivetted in him, simply because he hath not believed the record that God hath given him of His Son. “And this is the record,” be it remembered—(oh! let it be taken into the heart, by simple faith)—“this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in His Son:” “is in His Son,” for the guiltiest that hears me—“is in His Son,” for the purpose of a full efficacy when applied—“is in His Son,” to be received by whosoever will.” “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.”

Then, dear brethren, whatever may be your sense of sin, whatever may have been, in each individual heart, the resistance which unbelief has hitherto made, oh! think that at this moment, perhaps, interests of greater importance than ever were before, are at stake, and to-night, if not met, may be lost and forfeited for ever. Remember, “there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby they can be saved,” but only the name of the Lord Jesus; and it is faith in His name, which brings salvation to the soul. Oh! let this not be trifled with: “to-day” may be “the day of salvation” to some soul who has stood out in unbelief, throughout the whole of his past history.

Dear brethren, if faith in its smallest exercise has brought you to gaze once on the cross of the Redeemer, as the children of Israel gazed upon the serpent of brass; (however distant the gazing, yet the blessed effect followed;) so believe that in the very look of faith there has been a dissolution from the condemnation, there has been the first incoming of the light of God’s bestowing; feeble it may be to the apprehension, but the spark is there, and He who bestowed it will fan it and cherish it, and it will expand and grow.

Be of good cheer, then, if you have in the least degree the assurance, that with honesty of intention you have come, with the faith which you possess, be it little or much, to the cross of the Redeemer; for it will be increased by degrees, till in the end you shall be “more than conquerors, through Him that loved you.”

NOTES OF LECTURES  
ON  
PROPERTY AND PAUPERISM.  
DELIVERED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
BY THE  
REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.

LECTURE II.

THE very notion of justice involves comparison. The question is one of adjustment. Comparison is involved in the question of equality between man and man, as well as in the question of equality between line and line. A child may recognise the straightness of a line, and yet not the equality of another to it. In the same way, the mental power may be so confined, that the man who feels a hurt done to himself, may not be able to view as an injury the same thing done to another. As the child cannot apprehend the equality of one line to another, so the man cannot understand that his own sensibilities, and those of another are the same. Indignation may be lighted up by a blow; and so it may be with a brute animal; but in the case of a man who can understand the effect of a similar blow when inflicted on another, the moral nature may be lighted up. It is in feeling for himself that he feels like an animal,—not in feeling for another; and as he expects justice on the aggressor for himself, so he is inclined to demand it for others. We are not to confound this with the animal emotion of resentment; it is the moral sense which gives an appetency for justice. There may be a wish to be righted, unmixed with indignation; and though selfishness and justice are at one, that is no reason why we should confound the sentient with the moral feelings. The mere animal is urged forward by appetite, and his anger bears down all obstructions; it is only man, that if he meet with obstruction from another's rights, desists; and, if he mentally resolve to do this, he is morally influenced. The brute may allow its anger to repose; but it does not understand injury done to another; and it does not respond to any moral emotion.

To inflict on another pain which I should shrink from myself, is against the moral feeling. The child does not feel this at first; but is soon taught it by the question:—"How would you like to be so treated yourself?" I think this consideration is never present to the brute; but often by the very young child the iniquity is felt, by the moral sense, of doing to others what would make us angry if done to ourselves. Conceive the sentient framework of each to be twice more sensible—a man, being twice more selfish, would then be doubly anxious to ward off injury; but each, being aware of the same feeling in another, would refrain from violence. Being more tender of himself, he would be proportionably so of another. The sense of justice would be more intense than before. When equal sensibilities meet, each is more delicate toward the rest. If compassion, or horror at injustice, be diffused among all, there will be as great a recoil from inflicting a wound on others, as from receiving it myself. There is nothing in the care of my own person to make me regardless of others; but, in fact, to make me more scrupulous.

In the same way, a keen sense of *property* does not come into collision with a keen sense of *equity*. Grant the same moral principle to exist, and the more the sense of property is increased, the more will the sense of equity be aug-

mented. If great regard to a man's own person conduce to forbearance towards others, why should it not be the same with property? The relation of each to his own body, is anterior to the first dawning of the moral nature; but as the latter expands, and he considers that others are similarly related to *their* bodies, it leads him to refrain from violence. As his selfishness increases, so does his sympathy. He feels in a similar way respecting his *field*, and he knows that others do the same; and in proportion to his own feeling, he defers to that of other men. The sense of justice begins here;—not with respect to his *own*, but to the rights of *others*. It does not give him attachment to his own *field*, any more than to his own *children*. It is *after* this that justice steps in, with the golden rule of “doing to others as he would they should do to him.” (Matthew vii. 12.) When the moral sense steps in, it enhances his equitable regard for the property of others. It is with me as a *proprietor*, as it is with me as a *parent*. As we are bound to our own *children*, we show *sympathy* to others; as we are bound to our own *property*, we show *equity* to others. In virtue of our *sentient* nature, we recoil from *injury*; in virtue of our *moral* nature, we recoil from *violence*. Justice does not give the original *personal* feeling; nor does it give the original *possessory* feeling. It was not by justice that my *body* came to be my own; and there was a time when it was not by justice that my *garden* came to be my own; yet “he that toucheth” that, “toucheth (as it were) the apple of my eye.” (Zechariah ii. 9.) There is as much justice in respecting the *one* feeling, as in respecting the *other*.

This will save you from the perplexity of supposing, that justice presided at the first distribution of property. At the first collocations, justice had nothing to do with them: it was chance. One man set himself down on a better piece of land than the rest, and none interfered with him. Thus the feeling of property sprang up; and the humbler man would no more have thought of laying claim to his *acres*, than of laying claim to his *children*. He knows he would have the same feeling for all his fields, and for all his children. It is not justice that implanted either; but justice teaches him to respect both in the hearts of others. There is much obscurity in Brown and Paley on this subject; and an impenetrable mystery hangs over the lucubrations of the old juridical writers. All this obscurity has arisen from treating the *original* as if it were a *derived* feeling. Godwin made a regard to the general interests of mankind to be the origin of love for children; and it is as impossible to educe a regard to property from an original sense of justice, as the love of children from a regard to the interests of mankind. No doubt the general interest is promoted by both; but it is the work of *nature*, not of *man*. Justice does not put these feelings into the breasts of *any*; but it regulates the regards due to the feelings of *all*. The right of property is not the less deferred to, because its origin is not known; and though the villainies of other days may have obtained it, yet long possession casts a veil over all the debts and delinquencies of the original owner. They are forgotten in half a century. We approve the law which says, that the land shall be the possessor's, if not claimed within forty years.

There are two instances in which the laws of property and possession are deviated from; and both have done much injury. One is the system of tithes in England. We do not think the provision for the clergy too liberal; but it is unfortunately so levied, as to do violence to the possessory feelings of owners and occupiers all over the land. If it were commuted into a yearly tax, those feelings would not be interfered with so painfully. But the best plan would be a commutation into land; as is the case with some parishes, where the church-revenues wholly arise from an extensive glebe. Let the church land be divorced from the rest of the parish, and the arrangement would accord with the legal and possessory right. At present, there is too much exasperation. No doubt the law can force; but it is a striking proof of its impolicy, that in these contests it is always losing ground. The odium, in these cases, should not be thrown on the clergy; but on the law, which reverses nature, and contravenes the possessory feeling. Few revolutions would do more to improve the aspect of English society, than the removal of this sore. It is a sad counteraction of the mild persuasives of the clergy, that they should be forced



into the attitude of extortioners ; and exposed to a current of hatred and obloquy, which is sure to overtake them. Nothing has given so much force to the harangues of demagogues, as the unpleasant way in which the clergy are provided for. It softens prejudice to be admitted to an intimacy with the sufferers ; and therefore we recommend to your perusal Cowper's " Yearly Distress, or Tithing Time ;" which felicitously depicts all the agonies of that period.

It is a singular fact, that the Bishop of Durham is proprietor of as large a territory as the Duke of Northumberland. The latter, by collecting a yearly rent, restrains the possessory feeling among the occupiers ; his demand is acquiesced in without a murmur ; and, by a gradual increase, his revenue from that source is now two hundred thousand a-year. But the Bishop, who receives only one payment in a life, or sometimes in three lives, does not then obtain more than one year's rent ; and, from the long interval, the possessory feeling has time to strengthen. Thus the tenant comes to look upon himself as the proprietor ; and, usurping the possession of lands which never belonged to him, complains of the exactions of the real owner, as though the latter extorted from him his property. The owner gets only eighteen thousand a-year ;—not a tenth part of what is obtained by the lay proprietor, from land not superior in natural value.

The next mischievous contest between the legal and the possessory, is in the English poor-law. By this law, every one in necessity has a right to relief, from the possessor of land or houses ; and you can never persuade this possessor, that his property is not invaded ; that it is not a legalised enormity ; and that severe justice is not violated. He suffers more from the insecurity of his possessions, and the natural irritation to which this gives rise, than from the amount taken. His feelings are wedded to his property ; and this possessory feeling suffers perpetual and painful annoyance ;—leading to exacerbation of tone and temper respecting the poor. There is not much difference in his feelings toward them and towards preachers ; though the laws are *for* the one and *against* the others ; but it shows how the feelings of the heart are the same, since the encroachments of both are regarded with uneasiness. Even with the paupers themselves, there is an unconscious deference to the proprietary feeling. The contrary is asserted ; but there is a total dissimilarity between their assertion of a right to maintenance, and their assertion of any other right. They may be insolent on such an occasion ; but, generally, they are mean and crouching. There is nothing like an acknowledged right, in this battle-cry of " acres invaded." In a word, the pauper, while challenging his right, feels a want of firmness ; and, in spite of the law to prevent such an imagination, the possessory right of others stares him in the face, and weakens the confidence with which he asserts *his* right. He has the downcast look and the consciousness of a poacher. The law has alienated the rich from the poor, and has debased a whole population. There is only one way to remove this grievous distemper from the constitution. It is to harmonize the *legal* with the *possessory* feeling ; to make the possessory feeling inviolable ; and not to convert into a right, what should be a matter of love and benevolence.

## CHRISTIANITY THE LEAVEN OF SOCIETY.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. WALTER FARQUHAR HOOK, D.D.

PREACHED IN CURZON CHAPEL, MAY FAIR,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 27, 1847.

For the additional Curates' Society.

*"The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."*—Matthew xiii. 33.

A SMALL quantity of leaven placed in three measures, or a given quantity of meal, assimilates to itself the whole lump, and imparts to it a new nature and new properties, so that it becomes another thing, quite different from what it originally was. And to the effect of leaven upon meal, our blessed Lord and Saviour compares the all-renewing power of Christianity, as it respects society in general, and as it respects individuals. What, indeed, would society be at the present time, if it had not been leavened by Christianity? Read the first two chapters of the epistle to the Romans, and thence you may perceive that bad as the world still is, the improvement has indeed been vast; since now we should feel ashamed to speak of the sins which were at that time openly practised.

How desperate the wickedness of man had become, we may learn also from the history of the twelve Cæsars, and from the caustic assertions of the great Roman satirist, who was nearly contemporary with the apostles. That such monsters in human form as Nero and Caligula could not exist in the present times, is a proof of the world's improvement. They were, indeed, supported by armies, and irresistible power; but armies are composed of men, and they would not have performed the behests of their masters, if they had not been accustomed to regard without disgust, if not with complacency, their acts of cruelty and lust. Nero, we are told, amused himself and his legions with the tortures of his victims; he never would have done so, unless he had known that the fiendish delight he experienced was shared by the majority of those who surrounded him; and that they did take a brutalizing pleasure in witnessing the sufferings of their fellow-creatures we have evidence in the fact that multitudes, not of men only, but of delicate females also, crowded to the gladiatorial show and thronged the theatre, when the persecuted Christians were exposed to the attack, and devoured by wild beasts scarcely more savage than they. These things in our day revolt the public mind, not of England only, but of all Europe; though the history of a neighbouring country does show, that when the leavening influence of Christianity is withdrawn, and when man falls back into his original state, the heart is as hard as ever, and that its ferocity cannot be checked by the mere influence of civilization.

Never, indeed, had civilization reached a higher pitch than it had done when St. Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans; yet civilized as the world was, if God had not mercifully interfered in the fulness of time, and applied a fresh leaven to society, society would have ceased to exist; men would have

degenerated into barbarism, and every man's hand would have been against his brother. The leavening influence of primeval Christianity had exercised at one time its beneficial influence. To Adam and to Noah God was known, and faith still lingered as a tradition among each of his descendants, by whom the various nations and empires of the ancient world were established. The traditions of all nations refer to a golden age, and their records speak of virtues that had ceased to exist. At the period when the Gospel was first preached, the leaven was itself corrupted, as all traditional religion, without the written Word, must of necessity be. It had become a demoralising idolatry among the multitude, and had been superseded by a heartless philosophy among the learned. I repeat, that bad as the world still is, it is very different, blessed be God, from what it was represented by the apostle, when he, without fear of contradiction, described it as degraded by all manner of iniquity. Bad as the world still is, we perceive and acknowledge with gratitude, that it has been leavened with Christianity; the influence of which has extended even to all who deny its authority, and refuse to worship the God of their life. The very infidel has felt its wondrous influence. How different are the homes of modern Europe to those that existed before the leaven of Christianity had changed the character of society!—when the wife, instead of being the companion, the adviser, the bosom friend of her husband, was only one degree removed above the character of a slave, and it depended on the parent whether a child should ever reach the state of manhood—infanticide being so general a crime, that it was regarded as no crime at all. When we look upon the happy homes of Europe, and especially of England, where, because Christianity exists in its finest form, domestic virtue and happiness are prominent, let us gratefully acknowledge, my brethren, how society has been leavened by Christianity. Nay, such and so mighty has been the change effected by the leavening influence of Christianity—such the leavening influence of Christianity upon society in general, that the hardhearted, the cruel, gripping man of the world assumes the virtue of which he is deficient, and instead of boasting of the coldness of his heart, instead of boasting of the selfishness of his objects, he pretends to be a man of philanthropy; he speaks of his desire to benefit his fellow-creatures, even at the very time that the ends he aims at are purely selfish. And what does he in this, but pay a tribute of respect to those generous impulses to which Christianity gives rise? What does he in this, but proclaim that Christianity has indeed leavened society with its benevolent and virtuous impulses?

And here we find a powerful, though it be the very lowest incentive to benevolent exertions, in sustaining such an Institution as that for which your contributions are this day requested; the Society for promoting the employment of additional curates, being one of the many societies in existence of which the object is to promote or to sustain the outward frame of Christianity in the land. I say, the outward frame of Christianity—for all we can do at any time is to provide the outward and visible sign—the inward and spiritual grace coming from God the Holy Ghost. We must provide the water pots—we must fill them to the brim; but after all it is only with water we can replenish them; it pertaineth to God alone to turn the water into wine, though the mere providing of the water be beneficial.

A great deal has been said for and against supporting religious associations; but practical men, without denying there is something of truth in the objections urged against them, still give them their support, as being the mode in which the church brings herself in these days to bear on the mass of the population. In the middle ages the church attempted to accomplish this by monastic institutions, which did their work, became corrupted, and so passed away. The work of this age is attempted by voluntary associations. May the advocate of such societies and associations take warning from the fate of the monastic institutions! The monastic institutions became exempt from episcopal jurisdiction; that was always their aim and object; and so it is with respect to modern societies. Individuals, at the former period, were found to give their most cordial support to the monastic institutions; but

their whole object and endeavour was, to withdraw them from the jurisdiction of the bishop of the diocese. Let us take warning, in the support we give to modern societies and associations, that we fall not into this error. At the same time, we must take the circumstances provided for us by God's providence, and apply to them our principles as well as we can; and if certain anomalies are found to exist, it is only what we find the case in all things with which man, prone to err and to evil, has to do. The practical man is only careful that as far as in him lies the societies he supports shall be conducted as nearly as possible on the principles of his church.

Of this Society for additional curates in populous places we have to say, that such are its principles, that none of our bishops, differing widely as they do in their opinions, can refuse to give it their support. Bishops and clergy who take a strong party side, may prefer societies which have for their object the promotion of party interests; and bishops and clergy who are opposed to these party views, may be opposed to such societies; but no one can refuse, when asked to sanction a Society like this, which never has one party question, which refuses to act the part of an inquisitor, and simply provides for the incumbents of populous districts the means of selecting for themselves a clerical assistant, responsible, not to the Society, but to the bishop of the diocese, and with liberty to propound any opinions which do not render him amenable to the discipline of the church.

Although this is not the place to enter into any detailed statement of the proceedings of the Society, I may be permitted to inform you, that at the present time it supports 303 additional curates, who are labouring amongst a population of 1,515,000 souls, who previously to the formation of this Society, were very inadequately, if at all, supplied with pastoral ministrations. Of these curates, 41 are labouring in the diocese of London, at an annual expense of £2,750 to the Society; while the poor clergy so insufficiently supported are content with the food and raiment thus provided for them. To this must be added the grants made in aid of permanent endowments to a very large amount, even in the diocese of London alone. The claims of the Society are urged on you now, because it is unable to meet the demands made on it. Its wants at the present crisis arise from these causes—a large number of outstanding applications for assistance towards curates' salaries, which require the immediate addition of £3,000 to its annual income, and from its being unable to meet the applications for aid towards endowments. Of these more than thirty are of an urgent character, proceeding from the poorest and most populous districts in this kingdom. An aggregate of nearly £19,000 is offered to meet grants from this Society, which would probably require a sum of £10,000. Observe, then, that the greater part of this £19,000 will be lost to the church, unless funds are placed at its disposal to meet these local contributions. At the present moment the endowment fund is entirely exhausted, and the annual income is fully pledged. The total amount expended by the Society in endowments (that is, in permanently supporting curates in destitute places where churches have been erected since the formation of the Society) is upwards of £9,000, in grants to 31 poor benefices; and these grants have been made to amount, by local contributions, to £25,000.

The labours of the Society are far from confined to the diocese of London. Although he who addresses you has not been under the necessity of applying to the Society in his own behalf, yet he has witnessed its beneficial operation in a very destitute district with which he is surrounded in the North of England. He is, therefore, most desirous of stating, not only to you, but to any other congregation he may be appointed to address, the important claims which this Society has upon your support. As I have said, no churchman can have a word to say against such a society as this, which knows no party but that of the church of England, unless, peradventure, he be a man opposed to all societies; and then he can act as one noble-minded individual did when applied to last year, who engaged, instead of subscribing to the Society, to support a curate in a populous place out of his own resources.

And now, returning from the Society to the text—our object being, not to

gain your money, but to win your souls; for when Christ has your soul, he has your money also—if the leavening character of Christianity be such as I have described it, you see at once how the appointment of a curate, which leads almost always to the formation of a new congregation, in some destitute place, is a blessing of which it is impossible to calculate the result. The congregating, it may be, at first, only a handful of pious men, may be the means of conferring blessings beyond all calculation great, not only from what is intended—the direct influence, but even from the indirect influence of Christianity upon the surrounding mass. It may be said, and it is truly said, that unless people are brought to the foot of the cross, unless they are awakened to repentance, and come to Jesus as their Saviour, souls will not be saved. But in the circumstances to which I have alluded, is not a great advantage gained if we do something, to add through an indirect influence to the sum of even human happiness—if we, at all events, detract something from that misery which always attends the footsteps of vice? Have we not seen, that even among those who refuse to acknowledge the direct influence of Christianity its indirect influence is blessed? But we may go further. We are bound, as the Gospel of this day teaches us, to regard those around us with a charitable judgment. Many a good person exists around us, of whom we know nothing. It often falls to the lot of a pastor, to know persons who have had many difficulties, external and internal, to struggle with, but who are much better than their most charitable neighbours suppose. But, not to dwell upon this, warning you against uncharitable judgments, and exhorting you to think better of all men except yourselves than people are apt to do, I would allude to the fact, that even when the influence of Christianity is indirect, its operation is most beneficial, and the working of the leaven is perceptible; the children of an orderly household are, to a certain extent, prepared to receive the direct influence of Christianity. And here, again, in a family what do we very often see? An individual becomes impressed with a deep sense of religion, becomes a converted character—that individual says little, and does nothing to offend, unless offence be taken for that he acknowledgeth himself a Christian, and expresses a desire that he may become a true Christian. If his religion be real, he does not talk about it, or preach about it; these preaching, prating persons, who are always laying down the law to others are not under the direction of the Spirit of God. They speak of Christ—they are full of self; and being full of self, they are disliked. But the true Christian, if solitary in a godless household, is, while vindicating his liberty to attend to his personal religion, unobtrusive and neighbourly. On the one hand, he is always ready to discharge those offices of kindness from which others shrink, to act with humility, and discharge the lowliest duties; he hears with good humour the ridicule to which he is exposed, and the hard names with which he is assailed. If he feels that he is persecuted, he does not complain of persecution, but opens his grief to his God in private, and prays for those who are most severe upon him. Will not the mere presence of this man or this woman be as leaven to the whole home? Days, months, years may pass away, but, one by one, converts drop in. The silent rhetoric of that holy life will carry its own influence along with it, and those who in health and prosperity ridiculed the true Christian in his household, in sickness and sorrow are the very first to seek him. The leaven gradually leavens the whole lump.

There may be some persons in this congregation to whom these thoughts convey much comfort. They support them in their present distress, and give them hopeful confidence with regard to the future. Personal holiness, then, is often more efficacious, even as regards the spiritual benefit of others, than preaching. The man who is sanctified, can be sanctified only by the indwelling of the blessed Spirit; and if, wherever he goes, he carries with him the Spirit of God, his very presence must have a leavening influence.

And now to come to the question, how shall we become holy? What are we but a lump of evil? It is by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that grace is imparted to our souls; and the grace thus imparted acts as leaven and

changes our entire nature, as entirely and actually as leaven when it changes what first was meal into that they now call bread. The church is the woman in the parable. She is continually in her ordinances and sacraments applying fresh leaven to our souls, that our souls may by the grace given be more and more transformed to the Divine image. Why do we bring His influence to it? It is because human nature is through original sin so corrupted that even a new-born infant requires the implantation of grace to enable him to grow up in Christian excellences. But though leaven is applied to meal many things may prevent its operating. It is not always that leaven takes effect, and where it does, its operation is gradual and imperceptible. We see the effect not immediately, but after a time. So the grace given in baptism works imperceptibly, though as we find our child advancing in godliness, improving in character and temper, we rejoice because we perceive an effect has been produced. In some persons it seems to take no effect, or anything but a salutary effect, while in others the grace works in after life, when some of the counter-acting influences have been withdrawn. We cannot account for its failures; these are only known to Him "to whom all hearts are open;" but we, when children are born to us, take care that the leaven of grace through baptism shall be administered, and by "training them up in the way they should go," (that is, by removing the impediments to grace given,) we endeavour to prepare them to become Christians in truth. But it is not in this way only that the spiritual leaven is provided. There is a constant application of fresh leaven with every recurrence to the other sacrament of the Gospel, or any of the means of grace. And what is the hope of the preacher, but that this shall be done—that the portion of truth which from time to time he may bring before you may sink into your hearts and become like leaven there; subjecting your souls to all those spiritual influences by which the hearts of men are prepared for eternity? If we can but raise your minds to a deep sense of sin, then do we feel that the leaven is imparted to your souls—that leaven which is sure to lead to the full and complete reception of all Christian truth, as one after another the truths of the Gospel are brought before you. The preacher of the Gospel who knows his duty is for ever edifying, that is, building up his people in Gospel truth as his people, waiting in the ordinances and sacraments of the Gospel, and putting away all evil from themselves, that the grace they receive may operate in their souls, are building up themselves in grace, and so preparing their minds for the sanctification of their souls, through the whole truth as it is in Jesus. Woe to that idle preacher who, for a cloak to his idleness, assumes that two or three doctrines are sufficient, and throughout life rings the changes on them, denouncing all who lay before their flocks what it has been thought good to reveal. The all-wise God would not have revealed what it was unnecessary for man to study. The clergy are endowed for the very purpose that they may be students in theology all their life long. If it were not this, such a society as that for which your contributions are this day asked would not be required. The clergy are endowed that they may be able as they grow in knowledge themselves to lead on their people. Hence the wisdom of the regulation that persons should remain in one congregation, the instructions given being in accordance with that congregation's advancement; and hence too, they who go about from church to church are often learning, but never the wiser for what they learn, receiving meat when they require milk, and remaining stationary by supposing that they know sufficient; and therefore, hearing sermons not to gain instruction, but to sit in judgment on the preacher, they manifest their ignorance, being puffed up by foolish hearts. But although the real preacher will as occasion offer discover for himself and make known to his people the wonderful realities revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures, and which are for ever presenting themselves one after another to the view of the careful student of Holy Writ—although he will think the very dust of the sanctuary where the foot of God has trodden more valuable than fine gold and jewels, although the slightest word that has issued from the Divine lips must be precious and ever binding, just as the conduct must be directed by those whose hearty desire to please God and evince their

love to Him by keeping the minutest directions as well as the more express commandments of His Word—still what is it that we most diligently labour to effect? What is the main topic to which we would constantly refer? what is our labour? It is to excite and to continue the conviction in your minds of your sinfulness, and of the perdition to which the slightest offence considered apart from faith in Christ involves you. Is there here any open offender, one who knows that he is living in a course of deadly sin?—to him we speak of his approaching end, when he will find damnation to be the fruit of sin unrepented of. Is there a careless person in this assembly?—to him we speak of the damnable nature of sins of omission; even if his careless conscience perceives not the many offences which he hourly commits, we speak to him of those sins of omission of which the hardest and most blinded conscience must be sensible. Is there a person, on the other hand, whose heart has by grace been kept, or who has been converted into a state of grace? Are there any, who, on the whole, are leading Gospel lives, whose first concern is the salvation of their souls, and who seek to promote God's law by turning to righteousness all over whom they have influence, direct or indirect? How earnestly we press upon you, my beloved brethren, the incessant duty of self-examination as regards your words and as regards your thoughts, as well as your deeds. With this self-examination how do you, even you, become convinced of sin! What sinners you see yourselves to be! How do you strike upon your breasts, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" How much, indeed, of a pastor's time is profitably consumed in offering comfort to such hearts as these; in offering them comfort, by still preserving in them carefully the convictions of their sinfulness! The more religious a man becomes, the deeper become his convictions of sin; and this is the leaven which soon leavens the whole man. When the conscience is alarmed and distressed, the heart humble and broken, we then feel our need of a Saviour, and of Jesus the only Saviour. As soon as we hear of Him, we cry for succour—"Jesus, Master, save us, or we perish." This is the prayer made by the converted heart; and then how does the heart glow with gratitude, when it hears of God the Son, who came into the world and died for our sins upon the cross! "Create in me a clean heart, O God! renew a right spirit within me," is the prayer uttered immediately; and in answer to prayer, Christ crucified is revealed in the fulness of His redeeming power. The penitent heart is enabled to believe in Christ crucified as the only Saviour, and in believing to obtain pardon and peace. Thus the Spirit gradually enlightens what once was dark in us, turns to God those who were once the captives of Satan, makes alive unto Himself those who were dead in sins, creates anew in Christ Jesus unto good works those who once were the habitual workers of all ungodliness; from one degree of grace to another, from one degree of knowledge to another, from one good work to another, He leads on to perfection those whose first religious act was to utter from the heart the prayer of penitent humility, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

And now, brethren, what more need I say than to utter the prayer, that as Christianity has acted as leaven upon society in general, so may the truth of the Gospel make this a congregation of devout, holy, and reverential men, seeking the grace of the Lord in the sacraments of the Gospel, preparing their hearts to receive the gift that God will give them, by putting away evil from themselves—that grace which shall act again like leaven to assimilate them to the image of Christ. May this congregation be as leaven, raising the character of religion and making it more pure and undefiled among all around you. May what I have now said, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, act as leaven on the heart of every individual among you—leading those to Christ who know Him not, and inducing those who know Him to cling to Him closer with that faith which will leaven their every act, until becoming new creatures, we are all prepared to dwell for ever in that new heaven and that new earth which our ascended Lord is preparing for them that love Him, and to prepare us for which God the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, came down, to abide with us for ever.

## THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRISTIANS.

### A Sermon,

REV. EDWARD THOMPSON, D.D.

Incumbent of All Saint's, St. John's Wood.

PREACHED IN ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, ST. JOHN'S WOOD,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 27, 1847.

*"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you : but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings ; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the spirit of glory, and of God resteth upon you : on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed ; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God : and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God ? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear ?"—1 Peter iv. 12—18.*

THIS is a noble passage—it is full of consolation and information, clothed in the richest and the most eloquent of language. It imparts a most important truth, comforting to the faithful Christian, but most awakening to the ungodly and the sinner. It speaks of a doubt even of the salvation of the righteous, and calls up a fearful contemplation, respecting those who "obey not the Gospel of God." "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

Time would not allow us to examine minutely each clause in our text, and yet had we omitted a single verse, considerable injury would have been inflicted upon the whole. We must therefore give a rapid and running commentary upon the verses under our consideration, with a view of deriving and imparting some consolation and instruction.

We are exhorted to rejoice, inasmuch as we, as Christians, are partakers of our Lord's sufferings—and this is our hope, that in us His glory shall be revealed, and we shall be glad with exceeding joy.

Now the first thing that strikes our notice is the *fiery trial*. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the *fiery trial*, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." The reference of the apostle is to the Christians at Pontus, who had fire cast upon them, for the object of trying their faith. The apostle alludes by metaphor to the trial of *gold* by fire. As by the action of fire, *gold* is separated from all alloy, and its reality is proved by its enduring the force of the element without either losing weight, colour, or any other property, so *genuine faith* is proved by trials of various kinds, through which Christians necessarily are obliged to pass.

The intimation of the apostle acts as a *warning* to Christians ; he directs us to think it not strange, if any trial should come upon us ; for it must needs



be, that the people of God are to be *persecuted*. Christ suffered affliction; therefore they who are really Christ's must be partakers of His sufferings. Too often it is supposed, that the mere fact of our being Christians, should necessarily secure for us an exemption of all trial. Not so. Christ himself predicted, that His followers should suffer affliction, and the very nature of the mind and the constitution of the body, too readily declare to us, that perfect happiness does not belong to the present world—that for glory, peace, and joy, we must, by the eye of faith look forward, all which shall be revealed in the persons of those who love God.

And unless we were told of the fact by inspiration, and were aware of the cause, we might think it somewhat strange, that "judgment must begin at the house of God," as we are told in the seventeenth verse. But it is clear, that God has a *design* for every visitation, and He especially corrects those whom He loves. The word *judgment* may mean affliction or distress, without doing any violence to the original; and it was a Jewish maxim that, when God was about to pour down some general judgment, He began with afflicting *His own people*, in order to correct and amend them, that they might be prepared for the general day of trial. Thus the converted Jews suffered much from the *zealots* or *factions* into which they were at that time divided, and doubtless the cause emanated from the Deity. The converted Jews were afflicted by the general punishment, and God's design was to begin with them, because they were of the house of God, in order that it might develope itself by an illustration of His Justice. Indeed, all the primitive Christians suffered more or less, merely because they were Christians; and if we regard the lives of the apostles and very many who succeeded them, we must conclude that in those days Christianity and affliction went together; and we can only account for it, by its being God's will and design, in order to bring about a good end. But let not any suppose, because they are not faithful Christians, that therefore they will escape those trials that attend the righteous—No! the reasoning of the apostle, in reference to the wicked is most forcible. "And if it first begin at us, what shall the end *be* of them, that obey not the Gospel of God?" And if the righteous "scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

This passage may be simply paraphrased. If judgment first begin at those who believed on the Son of God, what shall the end of those Jews *be*, who have had all the advantages and the privileges of Christianity and repented not? and if it be that faithful Christians shall escape with considerable danger from Jerusalem, when the Roman armies shall come to destroy it, "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Where shall the unbeliever and the profligate transgressor of the laws of God stand as *living proofs* of their safety? Such is the first meaning of the passage before us; and oh! how awful is it, if we apply the second to ourselves! It even makes the righteous tremble; and if so be, with what thrilling force must it fall upon those, who "obey not the Gospel of God;" upon *the ungodly and the sinner!*

The text before us strongly intimates a *difficulty* respecting the salvation of the righteous, and alludes to the fearful dread of the position of the unrighteous at the latter day.

By the text, the righteous are certainly taught the necessity of always being upon the watch against temptations, and of striving to fulfil the Gospel covenant; they are also taught, that as Christians, they must endure afflictions, and that they must be partakers of Christ's sufferings; and these facts disclose to us, most satisfactorily, two important truths, viz.: that this life is a state of probation, and that there necessarily must be a future reward for all those who, through Christ, have performed their Christian duties, seeing that in this world, there is no corresponding happiness to the means used to obtain it.

Now if this life be a state of probation, it must follow, that the righteous must suffer as well as the unrighteous, because both are exposed to various kinds of visitations, and to all the different casualties of life. And this may in a measure account for the wicked at one time appearing to prosper, while the righteous are unfortunate. Truly pain and sickness and poverty often are the companions of the faithful, and wealth and health and apparent joy the attend-

ants upon those who obey not the Gospel. We must have noticed such an irregular distribution of happiness and misery ; but it constitutes the trial of those individuals who are the objects of it, and is absolutely necessary to the *existence* of a probationary life. But even if there be an unequal distribution of happiness—even if happiness constitute the life of the profligate for a time, while the righteous are being afflicted by every outward woe—this is our consolation, a consolation which we have derived from minute observation, that in the long run, the joy of the wicked gives way, and all former pleasures become insipid and unproductive ; and on the other hand the righteous have, even though it be at a late hour, anticipated very many of the joys of the future state, and been encouraged and led on by hope of a realization of eternity, and this to them has rendered an inward and unspeakable satisfaction, and thus virtue has secured a real pre-eminence, and the expectation of the ultimate reward has given encouragement, that one day good will triumph over evil, virtue over vice, spirituality over lustfulness, life over death. Most of us have made such observations, if not actually felt the believer's reward and the believer's glory. If we have not, we shall, when clothed in immortality and invested with all the sentient powers of eternal life and happiness. And this ultimate triumph will be enhanced by the prominent and marked distinction, which will be recognised by believers, as they assemble around the throne of the Great Eternal. Thus when Christ's glory shall be revealed, we shall rejoice with exceeding joy.

There is no doubt as to this life being a *life of probation* ; and it is to be observed, that the design of the Almighty has been most observable in the different ages of His church. Affliction first began at the house of God. Yea, even in the patriarchal ages a similar design is to be noticed. After the intercessor had pleaded for the guilty, and the apostate was in a measure restored to the favour of Heaven, and stood as the head of unborn and countless generations, affliction, or judgment, fastened upon him, with no ordinary degree of pain and remorse. Was it no judgment to Adam to stand over the murdered body of his own son, and to be a witness of death, as the hideous and melancholy penalty of his own disobedience ? Was it no affliction to righteous Noah to see day after day, the incorrigibility of those whom he was sent to warn ? Was it no affliction to him to witness the waters gradually rising and disordering the whole of creation, so lovely and so beautiful ? Was it no concern to him to be the spectator of the destruction of so many thousands of men, women, and children—some of whom, perhaps, he had ardently loved ? Was it no affliction to Abraham to be called away from his home and country, and to seek a foreign land apart from kindred and endeared associations ? Was it no trial to him, even though in obedience to Divine command, to lead his son Isaac up the mount Moriah, to bind him, and to take the knife to slay him, and have him, as it were, dead before his venerable eye ? Did Isaac and Jacob escape affliction, even though they were advancing under the blessing of the Most High ? Did one of the patriarchs pass through the world without receiving a portion of Heaven's visitation ? And was not holy Job afflicted above measure ? Was not David, the very man after God's own heart, a severe sufferer ? Judgment came to Him, and at the very time he appeared to be really of the house of God. And were not all the prophets, those holy people, whom God raised up to write His will, and were so remarkably gifted by the powers of inspiration, were they not afflicted ? As their occupation became more generally known, and their works came forth under the might of extraordinary and miraculous aid, did no judgment and visitations fall upon them, just as if some delegate of Heaven had been sent to excite the animosity and the persecutions of ignorant and heedless men ? And what shall we say of the sufferings of the Son of God, of His *agonizing* in the quiet shades of the garden of Gethsemane ?—of His being compelled to bear His own cross—of the persecutions of the rabble—of His unutterable sufferings, when blood forced itself out of His pores, thrown open by the violent struggles of the inward man ? What shall we say of the persecutions and martyrdoms in the apostolic days—of the sufferings, especially of St. Paul, that indefatigable and zealous propagator of the truth, of all

the chosen of the Lord, and many of those who succeeded them? Oh! what shall we say of that noble army of martyrs who suffered on the pile of fire, the rack, and the stake, as they gave evidences of the truth, even in their expiring mortality? Had the fire lost its burning? the rack its torture? or the stake its infliction of untold agony and death? These men, though few in number, were of the house of God; small was it in comparison to that huge and unsightly enclosure that harboured the countless mass of corruptors, who crowded their iniquitous altars with the beggarly elements of superstition and idolatry; yet how it enlarged when the fire burned the fiercest, and the racks were screwed up the tightest; thereby proving the truth and showing the purity of the faith, and most remarkably manifesting the completion of the apostle's assurance in part of our text; "*For the time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God.*"

We might, did time permit, dwell more at large upon the sufferings of the Christians in the first ages of the new dispensation; we might speak more fully of the destruction of Jerusalem, of the Jewish war, and the civil wars of the Romans; we might dwell upon the persecutions of the Christians under the heathen emperors of Rome, and the tyrannical and oppressive conduct of the Roman pontiffs, the true antichrists, and the various schisms and heresies which have harassed the church. We might open the mysterious page of the Revelations, and see "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held;" "the burning star falling into the rivers and making the waters bitter." We might allude to the "beast that ascended out of the bottomless pit, and made war against the witnesses and killed them;" to the remnant who "were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven;" to "the woman clothed with the sun; the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head," persecuted by a "great red dragon." Many such mysterious passages have reference to the sufferings of the early Christians, and show to us most remarkable visitations upon God's people; but it all proves that this life is one of *probation and trial*; and the very conclusion, at which we arrive, leads us on to look out for the future state. For it is very evident, if happiness be not commensurate with the reception of truth, and dealt out to us in proportion as we evidence it by our actions, there must be hereafter a state, in which shall be the fulfilment of all the glorious promises, and the reality of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Having hastily made reference to the sufferings of the Christians during the past, we may make some allusions to the *present*, then to the *future*, and conclude by a simple, yet profitable application of our text.

It appears among Christians of the present day, that happiness is not distributed in proportion to a man's faith, or misery according to his unrighteousness; hence, again we look to the future, for the glorification and the fulfilment of the promises. If we look into the world, we shall too often witness the wicked rejoicing in the very midst of their revelry and vice; and the Christian, like "a broken reed" drooping, as if the pressure without was too heavy for the soul to bear within; yea, we may frequently see misfortune after misfortune, stroke after stroke, woe after woe crushing the penitent after he had breathed out his confessions, and sent up his prayers in humility and tears to his God; we may witness death wrenching from his fond embrace one after another of his companions and his friends, until he be almost left solitary and alone; but what be this, except God trying the faith of the Christian, and probing, by an instrument of affliction, the soundness of his spirituality, even as He before tried patriarchs, and prophets, and martyrs; or His casting the faithful into the furnace of woe, that like gold from the fire, he may come out pure and unalloyed? "Think it not," then, "strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

In the last place, we must carry your minds forward to the *future trial* which is most severely to test the *faithfulness* of the Christian.

Let us again open the mysterious page, and dwell upon the visions of St. John. They disclose to us that such means shall be used by a faithful, and zealous minister, that the Gospel will be so successfully preached, and Christianity so widely extended, that there will be such peace on earth, that the Lord of lords will appear visibly to reign; that Satan shall be bound together with his agents. But they also tell us, that amid this peacefulness and universal spread of Christianity, the evil one "shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth," and that new enemies and new trials and new afflictions shall spread over the breadth of the earth, and encompass the camp of the saints and "the beloved city"—indicative perhaps of severer woe than ever fell upon those of the house of God. At that time, Satan being bound temptations will cease; consequently it appears consonant with God's design, that before the breaking up of the world, and the gathering in of His harvest, there shall be some severe test, to ascertain who really are Christ's, and who are to reign gloriously with Him for ever. And for this purpose, the prison doors of Satan will be thrown open, he will come forth *for a little while*, invested with fresh powers to deceive, and with renewed strength to corrupt, and to have all the appearance of regal sway and dominion upon the earth, "deceiving the very elect," by rekindling all the lustful passions of humanity, and by offering the most seductive charms to his victims, and by breathing into the faithful the poisonous seeds of death, and the venom from his own evil and polluted bosom. And as one victim after another is made, so shall they combine further to distress the faithful, and to harass the church, until fire comes down from God and devours them, and the devil that has deceived them be "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and where they shall be tempted day and night for ever and ever."

Now then listen to the conclusion of the whole argument. If the Christians are so to suffer, if the fiercest of trials are to fix upon them, and powerful energies be used to wrench from them the faith, and temptations of no ordinary charm are to be thrown constantly before them; if all, in opposition to Gospel truth, dignity, and virtue, are to be arrayed in the borrowed vestment of immortality, and the fiery tongue to deceive the nations by dealing out, apparently, substantial rewards; in short, if Christians be so tried, and seductions be so great as to induce the abandonment of the faith; if under all these trials the Christians who held the faith fast, and resisted temptation, if they have had difficulty to maintain their position, "what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Oh! terrific and fearful contemplation! One to awaken the sinner, and to move the saint! But are we to separate in terror? Yes, Scripture exhorts us to "work out our own salvation, in fear and trembling." But while it deals out fearful denunciations, it speaks by encouragements and love. Like the fiery tipped tongue of some angelic messenger pouring forth uncompromising and unerring truth, and then whispering in melodious sounds, the delicious terms of peace—so the sacred page stands out, and warns the wanderer in potent language, as he travels far away from friends and home. But when the spirit of consciousness is awakened, and the prodigal comes to himself, he hears in the distance the sweet sounds of music, or the silvery notes of truth pouring out the Redeemer's love and the Creator's glory, and calling many like him home to the blessed flock of Jesus, "that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one Shepherd," Christ the Lord, and that having been partakers of His sufferings, when His glory shall be revealed, they may be "*glad with exceeding joy.*"

Having now considered the text in most of its bearings, we are bound to extract from it all the consolation it affords. It speaks emphatically respecting the sufferings of Christians. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." Again—"If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."

Now to be reproached for being a Christian, is a most desirable reproach ; it is to arrive at a very great honour ; and therefore the apostle says—" *happy are ye.*" And there is an intimation most prominent in the passage—it is this, if we be persecuted for Christ's sake, we shall be assisted by the Spirit under the trial, and thus enabled the better to bear it. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ happy are ye ; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." Even as the divine Spirit rested upon Jesus, and enabled Him to endure His mortal agony while He was in the flesh, and which He afterwards sent to the twelve *extraordinarily* and then *ordinarily* to the world. The same encouragement is in our blessed Lord's sermon on the mount. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

The happiness spoken of in our text refers to no outward demonstration of joy, but to inward peace and serenity, entertained by the faithful Christian, while suffering for Christ's sake, but which is to terminate in visible triumph and glory, when all enemies of the cross, and Satan himself, are to be trodden underfoot. So that the true Christian, even when outwardly oppressed, has an inward satisfaction, that he is partaking of his Masters sufferings, and that when His glory shall be revealed—when the eternal Son of the everliving God shall appear, as an enthroned King, with His countless angels around Him, and innumerable immortal spirits doing homage, and blessing the Lamb for evermore—when redemption is complete, and the Redeemer shall strip off His humanity, and appear before unnumbered beings, as a God in grandeur amid a world on fire—oh ! then, he, the true Christian, will "be glad also with exceeding joy."

*Again.* The sufferings of the Christians are in strong connection with the *unity or oneness* of the church ; and proves, by a very strong argument, the necessity of their being endured. Christ is the Head of the Church ; and if the Head suffers, or has suffered, all the members must necessarily be afflicted with it. The scriptural record thus runs—"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

And if there were no record, by the very principle of sympathy, if any part of the body suffered, and especially the head, the branches or head would sympathise. Thus in a family, when *one* grieves, the others sorrow—when one is low, the rest are depressed ; and what is the church, but a huge family, with Christ, who has suffered, as the Representative or Head ?

Christians also must suffer for the purpose of being cleansed from sin. The gold, as we have observed, is never pure, until it has passed through the furnace, nor is the Christian unless he has been thoroughly tried. And it is somewhat remarkable, that the purer the gold, the more visibly it reflects the refiner's face. This reflection is the criterion of the purity of the metal. So the Christian, the purer he becomes, the more vividly he reflects the image of his God.

Let then trials come, we may rest assured, that with them, God will make a way for us to escape : and if sufferings be great, mental or bodily, we have such examples before us, that faith's eye is led from the suffering to the joy—from the cross to the crown—from an earth, full of misery and woe, to the everlasting glory beyond, even the eternal mansions prepared by Christ himself, for all His faithful followers.

He, the Son of God, is our rule, our pattern and our example. When He was being led to the slaughter, He appeared as passive as a Lamb ; when He was persecuted the most He was the most serene. And, at that time especially when He was *agonized*, when He should have been the most calm—when He was meditating the deepest, communing with His Father, and preparing to take upon Himself the sins of the whole world, then it was, that His enemies were the most oppressive. So may it be with us. When we are the

nearest to God in mind and in thought our trials and sufferings may be the most severe. But *as* the ocean is not less grand or *productive*, because it is upheaved by the fiery lashings of the storm, or the valley less beautiful because the wind casts its rustling among its trees, *so* the Christian is not less beautiful and holy in his profession, or less an object of Heaven's love, because the billows of adversity are rolling about his path. Truly, the principal features of Christianity are love, peace, and righteousness; but there is an admixture of suffering. Yes! Just as the clever artist, for the sake of throwing out his chief objects will introduce cloud and darkness into the background of his picture, *so* Christianity appears to render its followers more distinguished and more illustrious, as they throw out from their innate darkness and corruption the living characteristics of spirituality; thus faith is the most vivid and pure, when the Christian, in the midst of trial and persecution, throws His light, and His knowledge, and His love, around the feet of His persecutors. Christianity is a system full of refinements and endeared associations. When the world hates, it teaches us to love: when the world persecutes, it encourages us to forbear—when Satan is tempting, it makes a way for us to escape—when death is threatening, it cherishes us by hope. No other systems can equal it in impartations and solid worth. Like an inexhaustible mine, it yields its treasures to every man, who will labour to secure them; or, like an ocean without a shore, placid in its ebbings and flowings, it offers a serene and peaceful passage to the future world, far away from that awful gulf, where two seas meet in convulsed fury and terrific roaring, hurrying on the ill-fated mariner to the land of imprisoned spirits, doomed by an unhappy decree to suffer for unrepented misdoings. Christianity is a *system* of health and life. The body may suffer, yea and perish, but the soul, under the pure breath of Christianity, revives and lives for ever.

My brethren, fear not, if "the world hate you;" remember your Lord and Master was "despised and rejected of men;" and the "sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." We must pray earnestly and steadfastly for faith, and oh! when we have it, how we shall rise far above the passing persecutions of men! how we shall become daily more hallowed, and blush for every impure thought, as spirituality builds us up into a meet and comely temple fit for the habitation of our God! Never then shall we think it strange concerning the fiery trial, for we shall always be looking through storm and cloud to the future scenes of "exceeding joy"—to the happy state of immortality.

To there, where there is neither weeping, nor sorrow, nor tears, God give us speed, through the merits of Thy dear Son Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory for ever and ever.

NOTES OF LECTURES  
ON  
PROPERTY AND PAUPERISM.  
DELIVERED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
BY THE  
REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.

LECTURE III.

THE possessory right accounts for many phenomena in society. For instance : a man had a few acres allotted to him, on condition of keeping a bridge in repair. It fell, however, into *disrepair*; and all his property would have been swallowed up, if he had been compelled to fulfil the condition; and so the county released him from it. What was at first a favour, becomes at last to be regarded as a right. If a master were to remit the duties of a servant, once a month, and they were then resumed, gratitude would be felt; but if the remission were uniform and constant, it would transform a favour into a matter of rightful expectation,—like the giving of a promise; and thus what was at first pure beneficence, terminates in justice; and if it be discontinued, anger is awakened in him who has acquired the possessory feeling. Thus we see anger on the discontinuance even of kindness. You should therefore explain to people, when conferring a favour, that it is a matter not of right but of pure benevolence, and may be recalled when you please;—although you do not intend to recall it, but to obtain gratitude for it on every repetition. This will prevent animosity being felt on its being withdrawn. Much unpopularity is gained by indiscreet generosity, if so long continued as to constitute a possessory right.

There are two grounds for confining law to *justice*, and for leaving *generosity* alone. First, justice is a “determinate” virtue, and can pronounce on a hair’s breadth; and, secondly, it is a virtue of “perfect obligation;”—there being an obligation on one side, and a right on the other.\* But the word “*right*” has two significations, differing from each other. In the first it is used *substantively*; as—“a right to my own—to a debt—to an inheritance” &c. In the second it is used *adjectively*; as—“It is right to be grateful in return for a kindness—to relieve distress—to forgive” &c. In these different senses a right may be asserted and denied of the same thing. You may have a right to certain property; but from a poor relative it may not be right to demand it. You may have a right to a debt; but it may not be right to exact it from a father struggling with a family. You may have a right to a house; but it may not be right to dispossess the owner. There is a difference between a legal and a moral rightness. You may have a right to prosecute; but it may not be right to enter on a prosecution. It may be right in the eye of the law; but it may be wrong in the eye of sound morality. We do not say the law is in fault here. It may be right for you not to interfere with your neighbour; but not for the law to cancel your right to interfere. If the law were to interfere in all cases it would bring insecurity on property; and if a person were not left at liberty to forbear urging his right or not as he pleased, no room would be left for generosity. If it came forth with authority, it would supersede compassion; turning a matter of indulgence into one of strict necessity. It would be

\* See Lecture I, Page 52.

*Erratum.*—In Lecture II., Page 68, Line 29, for “*preachers*” read “*poachers*.”

worse if, by receding from the assertion of your right, you were to absolve from gratitude, and strenuous industry, and sober expenditure, and honourable truth ; which, if it had not been for a vacillating law, would have met and discharged all obligations. The right by law to property should be inflexible ; but men should have the privilege of prosecuting it (in a kind and tender-hearted manner) or not, as they may think proper. The *moral* right may be opposite to the *legal* ; and though the *legal* right may be made to carry it over the *moral*, and a creditor may insist on his right though involving the ruin of a family, yet it is better that while hearts should feel the law should be unrelenting ; that the region of humanity should be marked off from that of justice ; and that the former should be left free of all jurisprudence, and should never be legalised.

It is not a reflection on jurisprudence, that what is morally right should not always be legally binding, and that many a wrong may not be punished. There might be such a dereliction from benevolence as would make a monster. He might pass a wounded traveller, or look over a drowning man, or not join in the succour of a starving family. Such a man would not be *legally*, but only *morally* wrong ; and rather than that the sympathies of the heart should be moulded by a legal enactment, it is better that he should be left to the scorn and execration of society. Abandoned friendship or violated gratitude the law passes by. The debt is not pleadable at its bar. It takes no cognizance but of justice. It leaves the rest to generosity ; and often does the latter step in ; and, when the benefactor has become bankrupt, those whom he has succoured are looked to for help. But the law, which did not enforce the one, declines to enforce the other. What is, in a high degree, *morally* wrong, it refuses to acknowledge as *legally* wrong ; and if a man, in his present prosperity, refuse to relieve him who formerly raised him from degradation, no enactment can reach him. He has nothing to bear but the shame of his own worthlessness, and the execration of his fellow-men !

The law always punishes *a* wrong, but not what *is* wrong. It does not pass over *transgression* ; but it passes over *turpitude*. Many things are right to be done, which it does not make *a* right ; and the contrary. It is right to be compassionate ; but no one has a right to compassion. It is wrong to be hardhearted ; but no one can proceed at law on that account, as for a wrong done to him.

Attend to what would be the effect of the law, if it enacted beneficence as it enacts justice, and supported the enactment by penalties. Beneficence would lose its original character ; being moved, not from an impulse within, but by ~~an~~ obligation from without. If the sum to be given to the poor were specified, it would not be beneficence, but law—making it the property of another ; and to give up the sum would not be generosity, but justice. We must go beyond justice to be generous ; and the law, in endeavouring to get a hold, is obliged to retire within narrower limits. By the touch of law, beneficence is changed into another virtue. Law may lessen the province of beneficence, or starve it into annihilation ; but will never make it a living captive. Its very nature is to do good freely—of its own will ; but if the law interfere, the good will *not* be done of its own will. The force of law, and the freeness of love, will not amalgamate. If you translate a generous act into the statute-book of the *law*, it ceases to be in the statute-book of the *heart* ; and, by making it compulsory, you destroy it.

If you order forth generosity, as you do justice, you put it to flight, or freeze it into cold apathy ; but if left free, it does more than justice would do upon being ordered. If the latter monopolised all the field, it would turn benevolence into ~~a~~ dead statue ; but if benevolence had all the field, it would leave justice to be a living handmaid. Law cannot force love ; but love will fulfil the law. (Romans xiii. 10).

And as *benevolence* is put to flight, so also is *gratitude*. A man will not hold at the good pleasure of another what the law enables him to claim as a right. This makes it dangerous for the law to prescribe rules for benevolence. Such rules put an end to it as a virtue ; and also to that glad response, which ~~a~~ free-



will offering calls forth. They put an arrest on interviews with grateful families; and substitute the jarring conflicts of demand, and the contests of angry litigation. Either benevolence must have free play, or it is frozen into apathy. If interfered with by law, it is spoiled of all the unbought and unbidden graces that adorn it. It withers in the grasp of so rough a protector; and before the stern countenance of so austere a judge, it is turned, as by the head of Medusa, into stone!

If the state lay a tax upon *one* party, and transfer the produce to *another* party, what I thought my own becomes the right and property of another. This policy I hold to be ruinous; and, if designed to make benevolence *legal* benevolence, it will be found to fail. Law and benevolence cannot take possession of the same ground. The entrance of the one is a sentence of expulsion against the other;—expelled by so heterogeneous and hateful an intrusion into its quarters.

The law of parochial relief is alleged as an evidence of the generosity of the English character. No doubt generosity originated the law, and still resists its abolition. We do not dispute the generosity; but it chose a wrong place when it got within the walls of parliament. It should have been left to a free exercise over the land which was said to be its peculiar inheritance. In proportion to the generosity of the English character, should we have felt safe in leaving it free; and in proportion to its humanity was an Act uncalled for and misplaced. Never did law so transgress its proper limits; and never did humanity suffer so much in consequence! The advocate of humanity by law forgets that the sympathy of others is the same as his own; and parliament has chilled the generosity of the people—carrying law beyond its proper limits; turning everything of *rightness* into a *right*; and extending to other virtues what it gives to justice, and what it should give to justice alone! Civility and gratitude suffer, in consequence, as well as generosity. A matter of love is turned into a matter of litigation. Law has wrested a portion of territory from generosity, and given it to justice. It has changed the limits of property,—a change which is sufficiently vexatious; but, instead of fixing the limits anew, it has left the whole property altogether undefined;—lessening its amount in proportion to the worthlessness of the general population, which it has *enticed* into worthlessness. It taxes *one* man for another's *vices*. It has brought the *property*, on *one* side, into alarming *precariousness*; by the same process which has brought *principle*, on the *other* side, into alarming *relaxation*.

It is the unfortunate tendency of a legislator to apply his favourite instrument beyond its legitimate province,—beyond justice to generosity. It is as if a pedagogue were to carry *his* favourite instrument beyond its pertinent and proper application. Some of that genus (schoolmasters) think to enforce grammar by the ferula; but scarcely, I believe, will they inspire a taste for the beauties and felicities of eloquence. Whether legislators or schoolmasters, they have (I imagine) a belief in the sovereign virtue of their panacea; and I think there is the same spice of pedantry, and the same smelling of the profession in both.

## MESSIAH, THE EVERLASTING FATHER.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

HON. AND REV. BAPTIST W. NOEL, M.A.

PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, BEDFORD ROW,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 4, 1847.

*"His name shall be called The everlasting Father."*—Isaiah ix. 6.

It was promised in this passage to the church of God, ages before our Redeemer came, that the Messiah who should be born into the world should be the universal King, and that as King He would be "wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God;"—astonishing in His nature, in His attributes, and in His works—the instructor of mankind, who, possessing almighty power as "the mighty God," would not only be a wise, but a potent Sovereign. And it is further stated, that this Messiah should be "the everlasting Father."

As this is a term of the highest possible dignity, it would certainly not escape the animadversions of those who are unbelievers. One version of this passage is—"His name shall be called the Father of the age to come"—of which it is enough to say, that it is simply a perversion, the phrase being "The Father of eternity." The word employed in the original strictly conveys the idea of eternity—not of "the age to come"—as we may see by referring to the fifty-second chapter of Isaiah, where the same word is thus employed: "Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity:" that is, the self-existent and eternal. So that if God inhabit eternity, the same eternity which God Almighty inhabits is the eternity of which in this passage the Messiah is said to be the Father: "The Father of eternity." Another word is employed to express "age," or "the age to come;" and the word used in our text never has any reference whatsoever to "age." The translation of Bishop Lowth—"the Father of the everlasting age"—is less objectionable. It does not traduce the idea of eternity; but it still has the objection, that it introduces the idea of "the age," which is not contained in the word. The word means simply—"the Father of eternity;" and this expression is capable of three meanings, which have been severally given to it by different authors.

"The Father of eternity" may mean the possessor of eternity, answering to that expression in the New Testament respecting God: "Who alone hath immortality." And various Hebrew names are said to have this peculiarity, that the person is termed the father of anything, who possesses it. Thus "the father of glory" is a Hebrew name, signifying the glorious; "the father of goodness" is a Hebrew name, implying that the person to whom it belongs is good; "the father of peace" is a Hebrew name, implying that the person possessing it is peaceable.

But although this is alleged, and may be true, yet these Hebrew names will not certainly convey that idea; and we do not find elsewhere a similar use made of the language. If this be the true idea, that the Messiah is "the Father of eternity," because the possessor of eternity, it is simply the name of God: He could be termed the Eternal, as God Almighty is the Eternal. But as it is not certain that this is the meaning, others therefore have understood it more strictly—"the source, the author of eternity," (that is, that He is the source of eternal life to His people,) which has at least this advantage, that it has more immediate reference to the office of the Messiah; and this being a prediction respecting the Messiah, we may naturally look for a sense which belongs expressly to Him.

But the use of these terms elsewhere leads us to think that there is a more extensive sense than that He is the source of eternal life. Let me beg you to notice two or three passages, which are precisely analogous, and which will illustrate exactly the force of all three of the meanings that are attributed to these words. In the forty-ninth chapter of Genesis, at the twenty-sixth verse, you read these words—"The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the hills of eternity;" properly translated "the everlasting hills." If you look at the forty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, you will read, in the seventeenth verse—"Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed or confounded world without end;" literally, "to the ages of eternity"—meaning the everlasting ages. If you look again at the third chapter of the prophet Habakkuk, at the sixth verse, you will read as follows: "He stood, and measured the earth: He beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the mountains of eternity were scattered;" properly translated, "the everlasting mountains." Now as "the hills of eternity" mean "the everlasting hills," as "the ages of eternity" mean "the everlasting ages," and as "the mountains of eternity" mean "the everlasting mountains," so, in the passage before us, "the Father of eternity" means "the everlasting Father." The translation seems to be the most exact that could be given, unless we substitute the word "eternal" for the word "everlasting;" because, as passages I have quoted, and several others, manifest, the word would have not only to mean the future eternity, but the past eternity.

The passage before us, therefore, declares that Christ should be "the everlasting Father;" and it invites us to consider two very important truths—in what sense He is called "the Father," and what the Scripture says of His being "everlasting," or eternal. It will be impossible to examine the various passages of Scripture which illustrate these two terms—they are too numerous; and they are the less necessary, I rejoice to think, for you, because familiar with the Scriptures. We can only examine one or two passages, with respect to each point, which these important words contain.

I. Our Lord is here termed "the Father;" and we should notice, that this is not in reference to the Godhead. He is not termed "the Father," as though He had the name of His Father. In the Scriptures we always find a distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit; so that as the Son cannot be the Spirit, so the Son cannot be the Father, nor the Father the Son or the Spirit; but there is a distinction between the Three Persons of the Godhead, though there be but one God, according to the constant language of Scripture:

"Hear, O Israel; I am the Lord, and there is none else." And the language of the New Testament is the same: "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." So that although there are these distinctions in the Persons of Jehovah, yet there is but one Jehovah; and Jesus our Saviour, who is one with the Father, is not to be confounded with the Father, so that the name of the Father be given to the Son, or the name of the Son be given to the Father. Wherein they differ from one another, it is impossible for us in the smallest degree to comprehend. God Almighty is utterly beyond all comparison. We should have been equally in the dark respecting His existence, if there had been a revelation concerning the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. God Almighty, an eternal self-existent Being, is utterly beyond all conceptions that we may form respecting Him.

But the name that is given to our Redeemer, in the passage before us, is in reference to man; and it is because of His relation to His own people, that He is termed a "Father." God is so termed in Scripture in reference to men, because He is their Author, their Creator. It is because He is our Creator that He is called "the Father" of His creatures; and therefore, when Jesus, the Messiah, is termed "the Father" of His creatures, we have to examine whether it is in the same sense of Creator.

Now the evidence on this point is abundant in the Scriptures. In the hundred-and-second Psalm creation is ascribed expressly to our Lord in these words: "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands." If you look at the tenth verse of the first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, you will see that the apostle applies these words to Christ. St. John tells us, that "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." There are several other passages to this effect, one only of which I will recal to your recollection. In the epistle to the Colossians it is said, in language which unbelief has never been able to evade—"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature," (that is, higher than every creature;) "for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him." Thus He is spoken of as the author of our natural life, and therefore may be termed our "Father."

But as this passage is in immediate connection with His office of Messiah, the principal idea, doubtless, would be, that He is the Author of our spiritual and eternal life. This is declared to come from Christ. If Christians are now alive, whereas they were once dead, they are "created in Christ Jesus;" if God the Spirit has given them a new birth, in virtue of which they have commenced a new existence, the Spirit of God has been sent forth by Christ for that purpose, and when He has acted on the hearts of His creatures it may be still said, as it was upon the first outpouring of the Holy Ghost—"He hath shed forth this which ye do now see and hear." Our spiritual life is referred to Him, when it is said that He is the Author of our eternal salvation; and He is further said to be the Author of faith, in the epistle to the Hebrews. Thus Jesus, when He came into this world, communicated spiritual life to His followers, and may therefore be termed their "Father."

Frequently did He promise that He would give eternal life to His disciples,

when He was upon earth. He said that "as the Father hath life in Himself, so He hath given to the Son to have life in Himself;" "as the Father raiseth the dead, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will." So also He declared, in the sixth chapter of St. John—"This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose none, but should raise it up again at the last day." Again, He promised in the tenth chapter of St. John—"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Spiritual and eternal life are both communicated by Him. And not to multiply these passages, the language in the twenty-first verse of the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians is very emphatic. You there read, that "since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Because spiritual and eternal life have flowed to us from Christ, just as our natural life came from our first parent Adam, so Jesus is likened to Adam in this fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, and so it is written—"The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." He, therefore, when He appeared on earth, could say to the astonished and indignant Jews—"Before Abraham was I am." He was the second Adam, the Father of His redeemed people, the source of their spiritual and eternal life; and hence believers are called, in the second chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, His children: "Behold I" (applying the figure in the Old Testament to Christ,)—"behold, I and the children which God hath given Me."

In this sense, then, has the Lord Jesus Christ become "the Father" of His people. As incarnate God, as Immanuel, coming into this world in our nature, to die for us, and by redemption and grace securing to us eternal life, He has become "the Father" of His people. It is a goodness beyond all thought and praise, that He who was the Author of our natural life should see us in our fallen state, refusing His guidance, violating His laws, resisting His authority, and bent upon our ruin, and then become Man for us, and in a still more important sense become our "Father," the source of spiritual and eternal life to us,—giving us a new existence in Himself; and by the work of His grace fitting us for an eternal existence with Him, as though we had revered and loved Him with all our hearts, through the whole of our days.

II. But this idea, that Christ is "the Father" of His people, derives fresh value and interest from the epithet which is here attached to it: "He is *the everlasting Father.*" He who is thus the Author of natural, spiritual, and eternal life to His people, can never die. The term perhaps looks to a past eternity, because the language of Scripture certainly ascribes eternal existence to our Lord. Before He became man He was eternally one with God. "Of old," we read in the hundred-and-second Psalm—"of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands." "Thy years are throughout all generations." And the prophet Micah declares in his fifth chapter, that He who was born in Bethlehem was nevertheless that eternal Being, "whose goings forth had been of old from everlasting." The apostle John also could say of Him—"In the beginning was the Word;" and He himself could protest to the Jews—"Before Abraham was I am." And thus, having existed from all eternity, He might be said, when He united the human nature to the Divine, to be "the eternal Father."

But again: let us notice, that this term is applicable chiefly to His work as

Mediator, and it rather relates to the future eternity than to the past. I doubt not that the principal, if not the exclusive idea, is that He is "the everlasting Father"—the Father of His people, who will never die. And this idea is frequently insisted on in the Word of God. Look at the seventy-second Psalm, which speaks of the kingdom of the Messiah. In the fifth verse you read—"They shall fear Thee as long as the sun and moon endure; throughout all generations." He who is to be feared lives on; and if Jesus the Messiah is to be feared throughout all generations, He must live through them all. Look again at the hundred-and-second Psalm: "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end." And therefore could the apostle say, (not to multiply these passages,) in the thirteenth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever"—absolutely unchangeable and everlasting; and He himself could declare to His servant John, when He favoured him with a vision of something of His glory in the Isle of Patmos—"I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore." "Christ, then being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him;" and if He is "the Father" of His people, He is their "everlasting Father," from whom they can never be separated by death. It is impossible that believers should be orphans; Christ can "never leave them, nor forsake them;" and He has declared, with a goodness which cannot deceive us—"Because I live ye shall live also." Loving them and caring for them, as a Father does for his children, their "everlasting Father" cannot fail them nor forsake them. In all emergencies He must be their protector, and when this life is over, an eternal life like His own must be secured to those who trust Him. Jesus who is the "mighty God," is also "the everlasting Father" of His people.

And if this be the glorious truth, which the Word of God, in many passages I have not been able to bring before you for want of time, declares to us—that he is the Author of our natural, spiritual, and eternal life, who has existed from eternity, and as Immanuel will exist to eternity, and keep those whom He has saved,—then, my brethren, in the first place, let us see how well it is worth our while to be decisively His servants, His subjects, His children. If by any pains which we can take, by any reiteration of prayer, by any absolute and unreserved confession of our faults, by any diligence in the use of means, by any exercise of trust in Him, we can but call Him our "everlasting Father"—if we can be introduced to this relationship, that He should love us and care for us and watch over us and provide for us for ever—surely we have secured our interests, surely we have done that which throughout eternity we shall not regret to think of; and let us be decided in the service of Christ, if He is really "the everlasting Father" of His people. What unreserved denial in His service, what decision in the confession of His truth, what well-founded reliance on His promise, what a plain honest confession of Him before the world, is becoming in those who can say of Him, that He is "the mighty God," their "everlasting Father!" Let us take care not to lose this relationship, not to fail to attain to the comfort here and the bliss for ever, that is involved in being the children, or (as in many other passages He

does not hesitate to call us,) the friends, the brethren, of this glorious Saviour.

And do not, my brethren, pursue this blessing indecisively. Whenever there are great interests to be secured, whenever there is a struggle between great principles, whenever there is a great happiness to be attained, why, then to trifle, and to be between two opposite parties, is unspeakably foolish and weak. In all great crises, when societies are divided into opposing parties, and there are great principles in conflict, those who are between are commonly weak, and more and more falter, and lose their influence and often their respectability. How much more, when there is a conflict between these two opposite principles of belief and disbelief—the one to secure eternal life, and the consequence of the opposite being eternal death! Now do not, my brethren, belong to the vast mass of mankind, who are between these two opinions. If you do not believe that Jesus is “the everlasting Father”—if you do not credit the Scriptures, which ascribe to Him the glories of Immanuel—if you do not think He is “mighty to save”—then join His enemies, then be unbelievers, then be cold as the iceberg; but if these things are certain, then do not act as though they were a mere form, but give yourselves heartily to all the work and the allegiance, and secure thoroughly all the blessings and promises, and be able to call Him your Father, your Friend, your Saviour, and to look upon Him on all occasions as the God of your salvation.

If, indeed, you know that Jesus is “the everlasting Father,” because His Word declares it and His works sustain that Word, then, my brethren, trust the Lord Jesus Christ with an unbounded and grateful confidence. On all occasions apply to Him for your happiness. If He has a deep insight into your condition, and knows all your wants, and loves you as a father loves you, and cares for you as a father cares for you, then trust that great Redeemer, “the mighty God,” also “the everlasting Father.” When you are weak, go to Him for strength; when you are depressed, ask Him for consolation. Listen to His words, and believe them, when He says—“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Remember, all that has been revealed of Him, has been revealed for your everlasting consolation; that while you are struggling with a thousand evils, with physical and with moral ills, that are innumerable about you, He has told you that you may be happy in Him.

And if you know Him to be your “everlasting Father,” then, my brethren, remember the words of the Almighty—“A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if, then, I be a Father, where is Mine honour?” Give to Him unbounded honour. The temper of His universal church, now scattered throughout all lands, and destined in the lapse of time to fill all lands, is this—“Men shall be blessed in Him, and all nations shall call Him blessed”—that is, in affectionate admiration shall look up to Him as their best friend, and bless Him for His unbounded goodness.

If you have “tasted that the Lord is gracious,” and the power of His Spirit has effected a gracious and eternal change in your characters, then give Him the honour that is due to His name. Let all, whenever you have a fair opportunity, know that you for one have attached your hopes solely to His work, for unbounded and everlasting happiness, of His own free gift, and can meet the judgment-seat without terror, though you know you have not a

single work that could stand the scrutiny of the heart-searching Judge. And knowing that He has prepared a mansion for you in heaven, thither let your hearts ascend. "Set your affections on things above, not on things which are upon the earth." With whatever reasonable industry and diligence you pass from one earthly success to another, still remember that you are now only in the childhood of existence, and that there is a home in heaven prepared for you, by the free and unmerited grace of God. It should give a new charm to all earthly things, to know that we are passing through them to so glorious a rest hereafter; but we mistake the very reason for which God blesses us now, if we do not look through every earthly comfort to something richer and better and more enduring. Look to be with your "everlasting Father" for ever and ever; look to share in His paternal love, when "the heaven and the earth have passed away with a great noise, and the elements have melted with fervent heat," and the eternal Son of God has come again in His glorious majesty, with His countless saints and angels attending in His train—when Satan has been bound for ever, and cast into the den of his eternal sorrow, and when all that have served Satan are with him. Then will your hearts rejoice with unspeakable exultation, if only you have fastened your hopes on His cross. Do so *now*. Brethren, look forward every day to be happy with the Redeemer for ever; be sure that He will never leave nor forsake you; and if you are tempted ever to forget these great truths, and to cease from searching as for hid treasure into the mine of His blessed Word—if you are ever tempted to forsake the company of those that most love and follow Him here, and to find a baleful satisfaction in the company of the frivolous and the wicked,—then again think of the glorious inheritance which you will be putting in doubt, and which may be yours. Walk worthy of your high vocation, and live as the children of Him whose name is "Wonderful counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father."



## CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. HENRY CHRISTMAS, M.A., F.R.S., F.S.A.

PREACHED IN VERULAM EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, LAMBETH,  
ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, JULY 14, 1847.

*"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."*—  
Matthew v. 48.

THE declaration of St. Paul—"we know that all things work together for our good," is like many, nay, like most of the encouragements contained in Holy Writ, by no means understood in its full extent. We know that the afflictions which the righteous suffer in this life are sanctified by the blessing of God; we know that the spiritual trials they undergo are overruled for their benefit; we know that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church," that the attempts of evil men to repress the spread of God's Word do but cause it the more to "run and be glorified," that persecutions refine and exalt the spirit of Christianity, even as the heat of the furnace purifies the gold exposed to its influence; we know that "godliness with contentment is great gain, having promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come;" but it is seldom that we cast our eyes on the records of the past, contemplate God's dealings from the beginning of the world until now, and trace the gradual progress of His work to its mighty and glorious end. Did we do this, we should see the effects of national convulsions and religious changes at work long ages after the memory of them had passed away from human thought, or perchance from human records—at work even now, for the benefit of God's church; we should see the changes wrought in one age operating upon society in the next, working there new combinations, and transmitting them to a later period, again to effect revolutions yet more important; we should trace the great chain of events connecting earth with heaven—our destiny with the throne of our Father and our God!

It may not have been given to any to see clearly, through all its stages, this wonderful, this encouraging connection. "We walk by faith, not by sight;" and though it be hidden from our eyes, we are assured by Divine truth that it does exist, and that not one hair of our head can fall to the ground without the knowledge of our heavenly Father.

But the meaning of the apostle in the passage I have quoted is still deeper and more cheering even than this; it goes back to the very foundation of life, to the very creation of man; it teaches us that the successful machinations of the old serpent, the fall of our first parents from their pristine state of inno-

cence and happiness, the curse pronounced upon the earth and upon them, the admission of death to a world created to be for ever free from its influence, the expulsion of man from Paradise, and even the awful liability under which he now labours of eternal death—"all work together for good to those who love God." The father of men was created perfect, but every word he heard from his yet unoffended Maker, every fresh view he obtained of that Maker's power and goodness, raised him nearer to the Divine nature, inflamed within him a more ardent love to God and a greater delight in His service. Had man continued as he was made, he would doubtless have been increasing in knowledge and love, through the duration of an unending existence; and in this continual approach to the Divine nature did the perfection of Adam consist. It was a state of perpetual progression, to which, had there been any limit, there would have been at that same point an end also of the perfection itself.

And if we look into the constitution of nature, we see the same system of progression presented under a thousand different forms to our notice. Each created thing, in each state, has its own peculiar perfection: the acorn is as perfect as the oak, the chrysalis as perfect as the butterfly; but were the acorn deprived of its vital power, by virtue of which it strikes its roots downwards and its branches upwards, gathering strength and stature from the sun and the rain and the dew and the elements of the earth, till it towers above the forest trees and reigns the undisputed sovereign of the woods, till its boughs were spread far and wide, piercing even the clouds of the sky, and birds and beasts found refuge in its shade,—where would be its perfection? It will be answered, that the oak, though it may flourish centuries, will be at last blasted by the lightning, or withered by the lapse of years, and the butterfly, if not destroyed by his enemies, will perish by the cold of winter. But what though they do perish? It is but the change of matter into matter, bearing a different form. From the oak an hundred oaks, from the butterfly an hundred butterflies will proceed, to adorn the forests of another era, the fields of another spring. It is but a still more beautiful instance of advance. The tree may fade, but the forest will arise in its place; the same matter, unconsumed and indestructible, will be going onward to more extended perfection. It is being continually decomposed, that it may return to sight in new combinations, in more expanded forms. But the spirit of man cannot suffer decomposition. It has no elements in which to be resolved, but is the immediate and immaterial product of the Divine power, the emanation of the Divine essence.

The progression, then, of the soul, must be a progression of a different kind—not from one body to another, not from one material form to another material form, but an advance in its assimilation to the Divine nature. This is the glorious privilege, after which we are taught to strive, this the splendid consummation of the Christian course. "Beloved," says St. John, "now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Christian perfection, then, being a progressive state, and not confined to the perfection of any period soever, however exalted it may be, we are authorised to look for it on earth, to strive after it, to pray for it. Authorised, did I say? Our text contains the command of Him who was at once God and Man. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." It is not an apostle, whose knowledge of God must be limited by the span of His own

finite intellect, that has set the Eternal Deity before us, as our standard of perfection, but He who was "the fulness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person," and who was so far from enjoining any harsh commands upon His frail creatures, that He left the throne of the universe, to bear our griefs and alleviate our sufferings. He was a Man "in all points tempted like as we are," who knew the weakness of our nature, and the shortness of our vision. Yet, thus capable of judging between God and man, He has set no bounds to the perfectibility of the human soul, but has commanded us to take "our Father which is in heaven" as the model of our perfection.

In what, then, are we, while inhabitants of an earth so fallen, placed in a state so lowly, to imitate the perfections of Him who made all things out of nothing by the word of His power? Can we invest ourselves with omnipotence and omniscience? Can we fill the world with our glory, and call forth hymns to our praise from an astonished creation? Can we clothe ourselves with the thunder, and hurl our bolts upon the unrighteous? No, my brethren, these are parts of His perfections, which are no parts of ours. The perfection of God in Christ Jesus, in the life, in the active benevolence, in the holiness, in the purity, in the forbearance of the Redeemer, is the perfection which is to be the object of our imitation. It is not the awful majesty of God our Creator, but the Divine obedience of God our Saviour, that is placed before our eyes as a pattern; and there is no station in society, no period of life, no era of time, to which that holy life will not furnish lessons—lessons which can make the soul "wise unto salvation." Are we afflicted? Can we compare our afflictions with His who was "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," whom we did esteem "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted?" Yet, when was a murmur heard from His lips? "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done." The life of the most unhappy man furnishes no instance of agony, like that which drew from the lips of our Mediator this touching expression of resignation; nor can the mind of man conceive the intensity of that suffering which compelled Him to exclaim—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Are we tempted? Can we compare our temptations with His who was "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil?" who when poor, was tempted with the riches of this world; when feeble, with universal empire; when hungry, with bread; when forsaken, with protection? He was "tempted like as we are," but far more abundantly; wicked men and wicked spirits tried their utmost skill to draw Him from His integrity, but in vain; and His conduct under temptation is proposed to us for our imitation. Are we poor? "The Son of Man had not where to lay His head;" but He was humble and modest in His deportment; He laboured with His hands, He paid "honour to whom honour was due, tribute to whom tribute." He did not speak ill of the rulers of His people; He repressed the spirit of discontent, of insolence, of sedition, wheresoever He found it; and His apostles, who preached the lessons they had learned from their Divine Master, laid no small stress upon the virtues of humility, loyalty, modesty, and respectful obedience to constituted authorities. Are we rich, and powerful, and dignified? We have advantages which the Son of Man did not assume, for He "took upon Him the form of a servant," the death of a malefactor. But He "hath left us also an example;" He was kind and affable, "easy to be entreated," gentle and forgiving. He was indeed of the house of Israel and the family of David, but the Roman centurion and

the Syrophœnician woman shared His mercy. "Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free," were alike in His eyes; His active benevolence was exhibited not only in His own life, but in the commands He gave to those who consulted Him. He set a perfect example to children, by His obedience and subjection to His earthly parents; to the members of His church, by the exactness with which He kept the laws of Moses; to citizens, by His submission to the Roman government; to mankind at large, by His holiness, His sincerity, His habits of constant employment, of prayer, of reproving sin. Here is a model, earthly, yet Divine, by the following of which alone we can become "perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Let us consider, then, a person seriously reviewing his past life, and meditating on the responsibility entailed upon him,—aware that "the wages of sin is death," and that sin hitherto has been the business of his life—"for whatsoever is not of grace is sin." Let us suppose him searching the Scriptures narrowly, to compare his own deeds, his own words, his own thoughts, with the thoughts, words, and deeds of Christ, after whose example he should have walked, perceiving the incalculable difference, applying to God for the assistance of His Holy Spirit, and resolutely determining to lead a new life for the time to come; let us suppose him led to place his reliance upon the merits of the Redeemer, to feel within him the witness of the Spirit, by which he is enabled to cry, "Abba, Father;" let us further figure him under this influence, forming new habits, discarding old associations, overcoming the sallies of appetite and passion, till deeper views of Divine truth, and further manifestations of Divine grace, are opened to his mind, till his experience is fit to direct others in the paths of righteousness, and his example reflects lustre upon the name that he has assumed. We may go further still; we may suppose such a man, lenient to the faults of others, ever ready to find excuses for the sinner, without palliating the sin, "hoping all things, enduring all things, believing all things." Cultivating his mental powers to the utmost, not to display his knowledge, to win the praise of the literary, the scientific, or the philosophic world, but to do good to his fellow-creatures, to advance the glory of his Creator, neglecting no opportunity, shrinking from no danger, declining no labour, that he may succeed in so doing. Such a man as this we may pronounce "perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work." But in the catalogue of those graces which entitle him to so glorious a title, let us not forget Christian humility. He will exclaim—"I am an unprofitable servant; I have done only that which it was my duty to do." Nay more, he will be ready to adopt the emphatic language of the apostle, and say—"I am the chief of sinners." Nor should we wonder, that where other virtues abound, this humility should be found in like proportion; that where the Scriptures are deeply known, the purity of God and the depravity of man, the holy requirements of His law, and the insufficiency of our best works, should be duly appreciated. St. Paul, when he thus designated himself, was not far from being the chief of saints. The whitest garment shows most conspicuously the smallest stain; and he whose walk with God is the closest, sees with the greatest accuracy even the smallest deviation.

But from feelings and expressions like these, we catch another view of Christian perfection; and when we find complaints of sin coming from the lips of a Paul, we see not only what we are to aim at, but also what measure of success we may expect. While in this world we cannot hope for freedom from

sin ; that is, a perfect, absolute freedom. Were this even the case, the world would be no longer a state of probation to such persons ; and their condition, though less glorious, would be equally secure with that of " the saints in light." Watchfulness, and fasting, and prayer, would to them be no longer necessary ; temptations would have no power to try, nor affliction to purify them ; they would be no more members of the church militant, and not yet entered into the splendours of the church triumphant ; they would be out of their place, and exhibit the strange spectacle of an inconsistency in the government of God. Abraham was called " the friend of God ;" Job was " perfect and upright ;" David was " a man after God's own heart ;" Elijah was so perfect, that the Most High bore Him away from the earth in a chariot of fire, and he passed to the glories of eternity without suffering death :—yet did Abraham fall into unbelief ; Job into discontent and self-satisfaction ; David into murder and adultery ; and even Elijah into murmuring and distrust. St. Paul was, perhaps, the most favoured saint of the New Covenant dispensation ; to him so much was revealed, that it was unlawful and impossible for him to relate his extatic visions : yet we find St. Paul exclaiming—" O ! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" " I find a law in my members warring against the law of my mind." We find him insisting on the necessity of watching and prayer ; " lest having," as he says, " preached to others, he himself should become a castaway."

Thus, then, we find that St. Paul himself was not free from all sin. It no longer ruled, but it still lurked within his heart. His perfection consisted in the constant advance which he was making in Divine things. " If," says he, " by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already made perfect, but I follow after, if I may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Here we see that to sinless perfection St. Paul had not attained, nor could he attain it till " the resurrection of the dead ;" but we have only to go on reading his epistle to his Philippian converts, and we shall find a species of perfection, to which not only the apostle, but also some of his disciples had attained. " But let us," says he, " as many as be perfect, be thus minded." He, therefore, and they, had not only reached a high degree of knowledge, of love, of experience, but were still advancing ; and though it was impossible that they should ever equal the human perfection of the Redeemer, yet were they constantly advancing nearer and nearer thereto. Here we see, also, the necessity of having absolute sinless perfection, even the perfection of God made manifest in the flesh, as a model—a degree to which no mere human being ever has attained, or ever can attain. Short of this, there is no limit that the apostle and those who follow him, as he followed Christ, may not have surpassed, no degree of perfection beyond which we in these latter days may not go. Yet so long as the human heart is the dwelling of impulses, which though good in themselves tend towards sinful objects, so long will man require the strength of God, to repel the temptations by which he is surrounded. Not until human nature be restored to what it was when Adam first possessed it, will man's watchfulness be sufficient to prevent man's falling into sin. The soul may be free from the dominion of sin ; we may have " crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts ;" but though crucified, it still lives ; though repressed, it still struggles ; and not till we lay down the body in the grave, shall it cease from " warring

against the law of our minds." Then, indeed, shall we be free; the bonds that held down the spirit to the frail things of earth shall be broken for ever, and the soul shall expand towards God with a never-ending expansion. The first era of our existence will be closed; the perfect man of God is now "the spirit of a just man made perfect;" patience and resignation, labour and affliction, have had their perfect work; they have "worked out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" and the human nature of Christ, sincerely but imperfectly followed, the glorified spirit now looks only to His Divine nature, as its legitimate object of imitation. Lifted above this world of sin, and suffering, and temptation, crowned with a circlet of immortal radiance, arrayed in a white robe, and holding the palm of victory, will the effulgence of the Triune Deity strike on the undazzled eye, and the command, still binding, recur to the heart—"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Here we would pause. "Eye hath not seen, neither hath the ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what good things the Lord hath laid up for them who love Him." All that the earth knows of glorious and gorgeous, of sublime and extatic; crowns and palms, and white robes; light unceasing and unimaginable; seas of glass; streets of gold, and gates of pearl; mighty cities, and yet mightier hosts, all gleaming in the unclouded brightness of the Divine presence;—such are the figures, and we must ever remember that they are but figures, faint and shadowy emblems of the happiness that awaits the ransomed.

But heaven hath one charm more potent than these, one hope more dear, one expectation more invaluable. Next to the presence of God, we shall rejoice in the presence of those we have loved on earth. I know that many deny this; I know that many, and no inconsiderable Christians, tell us that our affections will there be so enlarged that we shall look with equal love on every member of the celestial host. They tell us, that "those who do the will of our Father which is in heaven, the same shall be our mothers, our sisters, and our brothers;" they tell us, that did the love of kindred and friends survive the grave, we should suffer so much sorrow, even in the kingdom of heaven, for those who have no entrance there, for the loved, and alas! the lost, that even the Divine presence would be but imperfect glory to us—the Divine favour an imperfect beatitude. But surely those who take a view like this have but lightly considered the matter. In a place where every tear is wiped from every eye, we may truly "rejoice with those who do rejoice," without "weeping with those who weep." Could not God erase from the tablets of memory all that oppressed the heart with unavailing regret? And if we look on the church on earth, we shall see the man who aspires to be "perfect in holiness, in the fear of the Lord," looking upon his own household with a love more intense in proportion to its purity. His love to God is the pervading principle of his life; his love to his family, to those who are joined with him in the bands of Christian fellowship, is only less powerful than this. His affections do not, it is true, remain closed up within this chosen circle; they embrace the community of which he is a member, the state of which he is a citizen, the world of which he is an inhabitant, and each of these, with an ardour progressively less, yet justly proportioned. That expansion of heart, which takes into its charitable view the inhabitant of the far-off islands that stud the Pacific, and the shivering native of the

Polar region—which recognizes a brother wherever it meets with the human form; if it be by the progressive influence of our holy religion refined and made yet more warm, yet more extensive, does not become so at the expense of the nearer circles. It is as if a double portion of heat were communicated to the visible sun; the farthest planet would partake of the added influence, but the nearest would still have the largest portion of light and heat. Ay, if this increase were going on for ever, the effect would still be the same. Why, then, should we suppose that there is any point in the Christian's existence at which this law should cease, at which those affections should be abolished, which are good in themselves and planted in us for good; which can never want objects upon which to exercise themselves; nay, more, which were a part of man's moral nature, when he rejoiced in his Creator's image? If they existed in the soul of Adam, they are part of the Divine nature, and shall therefore in the glorified spirit flourish for ever. Our Lord himself, when on earth, looked not upon all His disciples with the same love: there was one who enjoyed the blessed title—"the disciple whom Jesus loved." Peter and James and John were more favoured, more loved, than the other nine; and the reason is evident—they were themselves more ardent in their affection to the Saviour. Hence it is, then, that we conclude those feelings, thus authorized by Christ's example, to be a part of our perfection; and because they can never want fit objects for their exercise, to be eternal.

And oh! how delightful is the anticipation, that those whom death hath severed from us, heaven shall give to us again for ever; that love may have its seed-time in this world of toil and care, but that its full and abundant harvest is in a glorified state, where there are no mutabilities, no uncertainties! It does set in a strong light the perfectibility of our fallen, but ransomed nature, that those warm affections which we pour forth upon our fellow-creatures are in an advancing state—that they will "grow with our" spiritual "growth, and strengthen with our" spiritual strength; that death hath not the power to chill, nor the tomb to bury them, but that if begun in Christ here, they shall be perfected in Christ in eternity. Was not this the hope of David, when he lamented for his infant son, but concluded in pious resignation—"I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me?" Is not this the hope echoed by the mother, who lays her firstborn beneath the turf; by the husband, who follows the chosen of his heart to a home more quiet than he could offer her; by the child, who beholds the revered head of the parent at length laid upon the bosom of our common mother? Let us view scenes like these, and reflect if this be not one of the strongest consolations which religion offers? The separation is but for a time, but the reunion shall be for ever.

Thus, then, with that love, with those general and particular feelings of affection, which the cold clime of earth allowed but to bud, now ripened into a perfect state; with those faculties which the mists of this world clouded, restored to more than pristine brightness, will the Christian whose trials are over, whose afflictions have been endured, and who hath come forth perfect through suffering, commence the second era of his existence, and "leaving those things that are behind," even the human perfection of Christ, shall "press forward" to the perfection of His Divine nature, in a race no longer impeded, with a purpose no longer wavering, with a clear sight and an undying love—on, on, *for ever!*

NOTES OF LECTURES  
AND  
 ON  
 PROPERTY AND PAUPERISM.  
 DELIVERED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
 BY THE  
 REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.

LECTURE IV.

THE more powerful influence of the impropriety of enlisting the compulsory power on the side of benevolence is to be found in England. It is the wisdom of the legislator to know the bound of his domain; for his overstepping of it is the source of innumerable evils to the commonwealth. There is a tendency in all governments to intermeddle; and the English government intermeddled when it equalised the Poor Laws. No doubt sympathy originated and keeps them up; but compassion would have been found in others as well as in legislators; and, if they had let nature alone, any case of distress would have called out the sympathy of the neighbourhood. The humanity which, *within* the walls of Parliament, is on the side of the law, proves that *without* the walls of Parliament there is a humanity, to which the poor may safely be left. It is better that it should be so, than that humanity should be forced into action, or frozen into apathy by the cold touch of legislation.

Let us consider the variations in the price of commodities, as affected by supply and demand. The holders of sugar, for instance, have a residue of that article beyond what is required for their own wants, to exchange for other things. If they have too much, (in proportion to the demand,) they strive to sell each other; so that the great supply brings *down* the price. But if they have too little, there is a competition to obtain it; and one purchaser, by bidding out larger inducements to one holder to part with it, outbids another purchaser, and brings *up* the price. The price is *inversely* to the supply. But we can conceive there may be no variation in the supply, and yet a weekly variation in the price. Buyers may not have the same demand; and here the price will be *directly* to the demand or to the proportion between the supply and the demand. The use of money does not affect this relation: it is only an intermedium used for the sake of convenience. The price of so much *sugar*, will buy so much *corn*.

Some articles are more tremulous than others;—vibrating more in price. Hence the fluctuations in the corn-market; for the supply affects necessities more than luxuries. Let one-third of the supply be lost, in the case of necessities, and it will make an addition of more than one-third to the price,—perhaps more than one-half. Not so with luxuries; especially if we can substitute one luxury for another. If the supply of West Indian sugar, for instance, be lessened one-third, the deficiency will not raise the price in the same proportion as it would that of corn. Man cannot submit to a diminution of the last; and, if the price rise, he must refrain from other things in order to obtain it. But he can commute the West Indian sugar for a substitute, or can give it up. Here the rising of the price may be counteracted by a diminution of the demand. Men cannot do with one-third less corn than usual, without inconvenience; each, therefore, tries to get more than his neighbour; and hence the rise in price. Men cannot live without necessities; and they are not content to diminish their use, as they would that of luxuries. A diminution of one-half in the supply of esculents would quadruple the price; but a failure in all the vineyards of a country would not so raise the price of wine. Rather than pay four times the price for Burgundy, a man would turn to Claret; or he would limit his indulgence in it; or he would withdraw from it entirely.



We are not to suppose that people are three times less fed, because the price of food is three times greater. This rise in price only leads them to give up comforts, and seasonings, and second necessities; and to wear more threadbare garments. Thus the poor might weather this season of high prices; because they would get food more abundantly than the price would indicate, and would retrench in other things; especially if their former standard of enjoyment was high. This explains how they weather the most fearful reverses of trade and of the seasons; and, after an interval of gloomy fears and sufferings, emerge into the same comfort as before. This result may well be referred to that Providence, which has so harmonised society, and adjusted its parts.

The general doctrine of prices is, that they vary only with the quantity of articles supplied; but, in reality, this variation is proportionate to their necessity. An exception must be made as to spices; the dealers in which have sometimes found their account in destroying a large part of their cargoes; and thus a luxury may vacillate more than other things. Suppose that corn, sugar, and nutmegs were to fail one-third in the supply. The first would rise much in price; the second would rise less; and the third, though more a luxury than sugar, might come nearer to the corn in its oscillations. Sugar is so much used, as to be a heavy article of family-consumption; and if the price be doubled, the purchasers must economise. Hence the slackening in the demand. But with respect to nutmegs, though it is more possible to economise, it is not such an object to do so; as it would not make a difference of sixpence a year on an average of all the families in the land, or of a guinea in any one of them; and they would rather give three or four times the price than lose the nutmegs. An aged lady (to give another instance) would not give up her tea for a month, whatever might be the price.

Let us now apply these principles to labour; which may be considered as a marketable commodity, liable to great fluctuations, far beyond the variations in the supply. A small fraction of excess in the latter, has produced a disproportionate distress of the population; and thus a fractional remedy might bring things right again. The urgent need of subsistence raises the price of articles of necessity, on but a slight deficiency; and, for the same reason, the price of labour will be much lowered on a very slight overplus;—labour being the medium of all necessities to the labourer. Hence the more intense competition for employment. Rather than be thrown out of work, there would be a general cheapening of labour; and thus, by regulating their numbers, the labourers have the same hold on their employers, as the holders of a commodity which has become scarce have on their customers. If twenty thousand weavers were enough to supply the demand, the addition of only one thousand more would bring a painful distress on all; for wages would fall much more than one-twentieth. How melancholy soever this may appear at first sight, it leads us to look hopefully on the future destinies of our species. The misery of an overtrade being so easily changed, it lies within the compass of a small practical relief to bring back a sufficient remuneration; and if the future supply be somewhat and slightly reduced, there will be realised the spectacle of a well-paid and well-conditioned peasantry. Instead of labourers going about for employment, master-manufacturers would have to go a-begging for labourers. It is piteous to see a population prostrate from their own numbers. If relieved from the competition by which they keep down each other, they would be in a condition in which every genuine friend of humanity would love to see them. The question was once agitated in Glasgow, whether it would be well to supplement the insufficient wages of the labourers with a gratuity; but, being certain there was only a slight overplus of labour, I persuaded the employers to supply the superabundant labourers with other work. The plan was completely successful; and is now acted on in similar cases.\*

\* This Lecture commenced and concluded with extracts from Dr. Chalmers's Review of Mr. James Cleland's "Rise and Progress of the City of Glasgow", in the "Edinburgh Review" for May, 1820 (No. 66; Volume 33, Page 382), and since incorporated in the collected edition of Dr. C's Works, Volume 20, Page 369 ("Prospects of Manufacture"); and from his "Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns", Volume 3, Chapter 17 ("Wages of Labour"), Page 17; or Volume 15 of his Works ("Christian and Economic Polity of a Nation", Volume 2), Page 226.

## An Introductory Lecture,

BY THE

REV. JOHN CUMMING, D.D.

PREACHED IN THE GREAT ROOM, EXETER HALL,\*  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, AUGUST 8, 1847.

*“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John: who bare record of the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”—Revelation i. 1—3.*

SUCH of you, my dear friends, as constitute especially my own people, will recollect that sometime ago I began a series of addresses, explanatory of the structure, the principles, and the objects of this book. You will recollect that I told you then, what I tell you now, that in these expositions I shall produce nothing that is original, probably very little that is striking—but I trust much that is really profitable. A great deal has been written upon this book: much very foolish; much probably, (as far as we can see,) in vain; but in recent days, and especially in the pages of Mr. Elliott's *Horæ Apocalyptice*, one of the ablest productions of research and genius, new light has been reflected on the pages of the book of Revelation. I tell you candidly, that I shall beg and borrow and steal from that book of Mr. Elliott's all that I can; and I ask you not to acquiesce in his opinion because he is a learned man, nor in my interpretation because I have studied him, but in what seems to you to be the fair, the just, and the scriptural exposition of the words of the Holy Spirit of God.

The name applied to this book is a very remarkable one. It seems to me, however, that not a few Christians practically interchange two names of very opposite import. The first half of each is extremely like that of the other in sound—but the whole meaning of the one is diametrically opposite to that of the other. One is the word *Apocrypha*, which means what is hidden—the other is the word *Apocalypse*, which means what is revealed and made known. The *Apocrypha* are those books which are adopted by the Church of Rome, of human origin and of no value in deciding what is truth; the *Apocalypse* is the Divine and inspired book, made known to John in Patmos, revealed and taught him by the Holy Spirit of God. On the *Apocrypha* I am silent, or speak only to condemn it—on the *Apocalypse* I would that I were eloquent, in order that I might speak adequately to recommend it.

The words which are rendered in our version—“the Revelation of Jesus Christ,” have also been misinterpreted. It does not mean the revelation made by Jesus Christ, but it is the revelation of Jesus Christ himself. In other words, it does not mean Christ the *revealer*, but Christ the *revealed*; it does not mean a revelation about something else that Christ made known to John, but a revelation, or apocalypse, or portrait of Christ, which was communicated to John the seer in Patmos. And that I am correct in this interpretation will be plain, I think, to your comprehension, from such passages as these, where the word occurs; for the word *apocalypse* (I may state to you) occurs very frequently in Scripture, but unhappily, in our admirable translation—justly the

\* This room is to be used for some time for worship by the congregation of the Scotch Church, Crown Court, while their place of worship is shut up for enlargement and repairs. It was extremely crowded.

subject of almost universal eulogy—there is a change of rendering though there be none in the original. For instance : in the first epistle to the Corinthians, the first chapter, at the seventh verse, it is in our version—“ So that ye come behind in no gift ; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now in the original it is—“ waiting for the *apocalypse* of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Again : in the second epistle to the Thessalonians, the first chapter, at the seventh verse, you will find another rendering, but it is still the same original word : “ And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven.” It is, literally translated—“ in the apocalypse of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven.” Again : in the first epistle of Peter, the first chapter, and the seventh verse, and also at the thirteenth verse, we have the same word, but again differently translated. And here I may remark how great a pity it is that the same word should be the subject of a variety of translations. If it had been translated in one way throughout the New Testament, it would have made the beauty and the force of the meaning of the Spirit of God evolve more vividly. We read, in the first epistle of Peter, the first chapter, and the seventh verse—“ That it might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” In the original it is—“ in the apocalypse,” in the revelation “ of Jesus Christ.” And in the thirteenth verse of the same chapter—“ Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Here again it is in the original—“ in the apocalypse of Jesus Christ.” And in all these passages it means, not a disclosure, or revelation, or manifestation made by Christ, but made concerning or of Christ. In other words, the title of this book is not Christ the revealer, but Christ the revealed ; and that revelation of Christ, we are told, was also given by Christ to John His servant, in the Isle of Patmos.

This book, then, you will perceive, from these passages and from this explanation of their meaning, is an inspired portrait of the Son of God ; it is (if I may borrow the expression) the epiphany of Jesus—the description of His personal glory, to which prophets and martyrs looked forward with waiting hope—an apocalypse so brilliant that the sight of the Jew was altogether dazzled by its splendour, so much so that he could not see the intervening valleys of Gethsemane and Calvary, through which Christ must move, in order to obtain and inherit His predestined glory. Very beautifully, therefore, the book begins—“ Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him ;” and very appropriately this book closes—“ Surely, I come quickly : Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus.” It begins with His advent and ends with it. That sublime, sustaining, and precious hope is in the eye of the holy seer, when he sat down to receive his bright visions, and the same hope is in his eye when he kneels down at the close and cries—“ Come, Lord Jesus.” He had seen and leaned on the bosom of the Sufferer, and he longs to see and reign with his risen and glorified King. “ Whom having not seen, we love ; and in whom though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

The distinction between the revelation of Christ in the Apocalypse, and the revelation of Christ in the Gospels, is briefly this : the Gospels represent Christ the sufferer—the Apocalypse depicts Christ the conqueror. The Gospels detail “ His agony, His cross, His passion, His bloody sweat”—the Apocalypse describes His throne, His “ many crowns,” and prostrate saints adoring and saying—“ Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto our God, to Him be glory and honour and blessing.” In the Gospels we see the shadow of the cross, deep, dark, and palpable to all—in the Apocalypse the lustre of the crown shines forth in all its unearthly brilliancy, so that he that reads may run while he reads it. In the Gospels we have Christ a priest at the altar—in the Apocalypse we see Christ a King upon His throne ; in the one we have Christ in the robes of Aaron—in the other we have Christ in the royalties of David ; in the first we behold Christ the sacrificing priest, the atoning victim—in the second we discover Christ with the “ many crowns” upon His head, “ Lord of lords, and King of kings.” Thus, then, the Gospels reveal Christ amid the associations of Calvary—the Apocalypse reveals Christ with all the accompaniments of glory ; each in its place, each for its object, is the revelation, or the apocalypse of Christ.

You cannot but observe that the language in the passage I have selected for exposition, discourages and discountenances the very popular idea—that we are

not to study, and that we cannot possibly become acquainted with things predicted, but not yet performed. Most men say, 'Things *performed* we may study and improve; but things *predicted* we have nothing to do with, except to lay them aside upon the shelf, and wait till their actual performance casts its light upon them, and shapes the dim prophecy into history.' But certainly this idea is not sanctioned in the passage I have selected for exposition; for this revelation was sent to Christ's servant John, "to show unto His *servants* things which must shortly come to pass." It does not read thus—"to show unto His servant John," but "to show unto His *servants*;" the word is in the plural number; that is, to all Christians. And to show them what? Not the things which have already come to pass, but "things which must shortly come to pass"—not the facts of the past, but the events of the future. Now the popular idea is, that these predicted things we ought not to attempt to understand, and that it is only performed things that we ought to endeavour to profit by. The statement here, if that statement is to be received, (as unquestionably it ought,) is that things that are predicted, that are foreshown, are to be studied just because they are inspired, and may, though dimly and darkly as through a glass be understood by the servants and people of God. You recollect, Daniel explained to the captives in Babylon future things, and thus comforted them, not with past records, but with unfulfilled prophecies. You may recollect also, that our blessed Lord minutely predicted to His apostles the destruction of Jerusalem; and He told them how they were to conduct themselves in the prospect of that destruction. He showed them that responsibilities were incurred, by their knowing things predicted; and the apostles, we read, and the Christians who fled to Pella, believed the prophecy, and escaped the ruin, having done well in taking heed to the prophecy that shone as a light in a dark place. It is also very remarkable, that one office of the Holy Spirit of God—an office that cannot be explained on the popular presumption we have alluded to—is, that "He will show you things to come;" and the apostle Peter tells us, in his second epistle, the first chapter, at the nineteenth verse, that there is "a sure word of prophecy, unto which we do well to take heed, as to a light shining in a dark place;" and we are told also, in the third chapter, at the first verse—"This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." We are told by the apostle Paul, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart man the things which God hath prepared for the of that love Him." That is future. But he adds—"But He hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit;" teaching us, therefore, that things which have not yet come to pass, are things that we may study. They may not be essential to our personal safety, but they may contribute to our spiritual comfort, and to the glory and honour and praise of God. And why did the Jews, we may ask, reject the Messiah in His sufferings? Just because they neglected the study of unfulfilled prophecy. And may not we also be found neglecting privileges, if not despising duties, when we make the book of Revelation that book which we never read in our families, nor study in our closets, nor listen to, as expounded and explained from the pulpit, by the ministers of Christ?

It was not so in olden days; for this book was a favourite study with the early Christians. The martyrs of the first three centuries found springs of comfort in the addresses to the seven churches, which refreshed their souls amid the flames. The Reformers, as you may well know, and recollect from reading, found in the Apocalypse the most condemning verdicts against the great Western apostacy, and from its description as from a full and exhaustless arsenal, they drew the weapons with which they smote and overthrew the great Dragon of the West, with the most exterminating and complete success. This holy book seems to me to be a lamp, which shines over all the history of our world, that casts illuminating rays into all its perplexing and perplexed events, and that taken as a lamp in a place which is otherwise entirely dark, may be to us a light beam from on high, "a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path," to which we shall "do well to take heed."

In the next place, this Apocalypse, or book of Revelation, is stated, at the

beginning of the first chapter, to have been written under the inspiration of the Spirit, by John, who testified of the Word of God. There can be no doubt that this was John the evangelist; his testimony was emphatically that of "the Word;" his Gospel is peculiarly the Gospel of "the Word made flesh." The very commencement of his Gospel is—"In the beginning was the Word;" and the close of his Gospel is—"These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through His name." And Wetstein and Lardner, two distinguished critics upon the original, as well as the contents of the Scriptures, have selected about thirty or forty texts from the Apocalypse, which contain words and phrases and forms of expression that are almost identical with those used in the Gospels,—thus proving that the same John who wrote the Gospel was the writer of the Apocalypse; and such differences of style, as unquestionably do occur, are to be explained and accounted for by the difference of the subjects, and perhaps also of time. The Gospel was written by John sixty years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, and was, if I may so speak, a cool and dispassionate retrospect and record of that sublime biography; the Apocalypse, on the other hand, was written the very moment its truths were taught and its visions made known—the depth and splendour of the scene making a deeper impression, and originating more expressive words. And therefore the Apocalypse contains an eloquence of language, a grandeur of thought, and a magnificence of style, which certainly are not approached by the more prosaic and historical narrative of the Gospel. This difference, however, is easily accounted for; the subject and date will explain the simplicity of the narrative of the one, and the sublime and poetic extacy by which the other is characterised.

The time at which the Apocalypse was written, was about the year 97. John was banished to Patmos by the emperor Domitian; and if we had no other evidence that it was during the reign of Domitian, we have it in the fact that he was the first Roman emperor who adopted that mode of punishment. But John's banishment from his earthly home lifted him nearer a heavenly one. He was condemned and banished by a king that died, that he might be favoured and comforted by "the King of kings." An inner radiance was poured into his spirit, that more than compensated for his external night. God thus gives His people in all circumstances compensatory elements. In the history of His church, He often makes afflictions beautiful, by weaving through them the rainbow of His mercy and love. He thus made barren Patmos a scene of manifestation of far richer glories than Tabor. He can make the tents of Mesekh and the tabernacles of Kedar repose in a sunshine more glorious than ever fell on the towers of Salem. God's Shechinah often illuminates the desert. Daniel beheld in Babylon bright visions he saw not elsewhere; John, in Patmos, beheld a glory he never witnessed in Jerusalem; John Bunyan, in his lonely prison, had dreams and visions, approaching in their purity and splendour to apocalyptic scenes; and Martin Luther, during his confinement in Wartburg, translated the Scriptures, and had the enjoyment of a freedom to which thousands outside were strangers. It is the heart, not the house, that makes home. And thus, while the afflictions of God's people abound, their joys abound also. The cloud that is darkest, is fringed to their eyes with beams of celestial lustre, and crushing calamities unveil within them latent mercies; and those who have been in the deepest affliction, have been the first to exclaim, on emerging from its depths—"It was good for me that I was afflicted."

Let me also show you, that this book has been recognized as canonical in every age of the Christian church. I will quote only one or two references, but these will sufficiently vindicate it. Perhaps you are aware that the Church of Rome has made the frequent objection, that we Protestants are indebted to her decision for the possession of the Apocalypse at all. They say, the Apocalypse was not admitted by that church, by any public act, or by any synodical decision, till the fifth, if not the sixth century. But if this be true, instead of proving that the church of Rome has great credit, it rather reflects upon her the greatest discredit—for it shows how sleepy that church must have been, how blind her vision, how forgetful of her duties, seeing that she failed to recognize as canonical a Divine book during six centuries in succession. Does it not also show, how much more trustworthy is private judgment than ecclesiastical decisions, when fathers and writers and doctors saw the inspiration of the Apocalypse, and pronounced it to be Divine, while

the church of Rome did not know that it was part of the Sacred Canon at all ? For instance : Ignatius, one of the earliest of the Christian fathers, who lived in the year 107—that is, just ten years after John wrote the Apocalypse—quotes several passages from this book, thus showing that it was in existence in his day, and perused by his co-presbyters and people. Polycarp, another father, a martyr, who lived in the year 108, when he was brought to the faggot to be consumed in the flames, offered up a prayer used in the eleventh chapter of the book of Revelation, at the seventeenth verse—"We give Thee thanks, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." And immediately after him, Irenæus, whose name is associated with peace, and whose writings contain some beautiful appeals on behalf of peace, quotes portions of the Apocalypse, and adds the interesting statement, preserved in the writings of Eusebius, that John wrote it at the latter end of the reign of Domitian, when in exile at Patmos. Justin Martyr, who lived in the year 140—that is, forty-three years after the Apocalypse was written, not only read it, but wrote an explanation of it. And Eusebius in the fourth century, and Jerome, the most learned of all the Latin fathers, likewise quote it as a portion of the inspired Record, and record reflections upon it. It is, however, only just, to add, that some divines of the fourth century rejected the Apocalypse, and the reason why they rejected it was, that it contained, as they alledged, prophecies of the Millennium, and of what they believed to be a carnal Millennium ; and because it did so, they thought it could not be inspired : just in the same way as some Christians still argue, that the Bible cannot be God's Word, because it contains truths that cross their prejudices, or lays on them duties which they decline to fulfil, or unfolds the mere outward drapery of stupendous mysteries, which angels cannot soar to, and which the human imagination cannot of course comprehend. But to argue in this way is to argue most illogically. The divinity of the book rests upon its own basis ; the explanation of the book is to be decided on just and proper principles.

In the next place, I must notice here, that there is a special benediction pronounced upon those who read it. Many people say—"Oh ! the Revelation is full of dark things we ought not to meddle with." But what does the Spirit of God say ? "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein." Shall we say it is wrong to read what the Spirit of God has thought it right to record ? Shall we say that the difficulty of interpreting the book is a reason why we should not even read, still less try to understand what the Spirit of God has inspired ? Shall we hold it perilous to study what the Holy Spirit has pronounced it blessed to read, and, by fair inference, possible to understand ? We may read it in a presumptuous spirit—that is sinful ; but to attempt to understand it, in a reverent and prayerful spirit—that is blessed. Lay aside the presumption, that dictates as eternal truths its own hasty conclusions ; but do not lay aside the prayerful study and perusal of the book, on the very vestibule of which the Spirit of God has written—"Blessed are they that read and hear the words of this prophecy." Far be it from me to conceal, that there is an awful and a solemn anathema pronounced upon all who shall attempt to subtract from, or add to "the things that are written in this book." At the close of it it is said—"If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." This is an awful announcement ; and this ought to solemnize the mind of every student of it : but if it be perilous to misinterpret it, can it be safe not to read it at all ? Would not the legitimate conclusion be, not to lay it aside, because there is an anathema on him who perverts it, but to open the book, and diligently study it, and pray for the Spirit of God to enlighten our minds, and lead them to a sober and true exposition, and then we shall be lifted from the anathema that descends upon the misinterpreter, and shall be placed under the blessing that lights on him who reads and understands it ?

I regard this book, not as a dark and inexplicable hieroglyphic, which it is humility and duty to leave unopened, but as a light that shines on the dark and troubled waters of time—those waters over which the church of the redeemed is ploughing her arduous and perilous way. And I believe that that light will not be like a light upon the stern, leaving useless brilliancy in her wake, but like a light upon the prow, showing before the beacons it is our safety to avoid, and the course it becomes our duty to pursue, till that day break upon the waste

of waters, when the great Pilot himself shall enter into the vessel, and say to the stormy waves around it—"Be still;" and guide her to a haven of perpetual peace.

Now while I feel that there is much, in the past history of the interpretation of this book, to make us cautious and prayerful, I still think there is nothing to warrant neglect. Poor Edward Irving, (one of the most gifted minds, but awfully—all but fatally shipwrecked,) grafted upon this book the most extravagant and monstrous delusions; and because he left behind him explanations as perilous as mischievous, it is argued, that we should not attempt to study and understand where so gifted a genius has failed and made shipwreck. But it seems to me, that misinterpretation in the past, instead of being a reason for neglect, is only a new reason for more prayerful and earnest efforts after just and proper interpretation for the future. Abuse is not certainly a reason against use; past error in the pursuit of truth does not make future success impossible; and may it not be true, that the failures of former expositors shall prove, (as Mr. Elliott seems to me to have shown,) the surest pioneer of success, on the part of those that follow? Every ship that is wrecked in our channel, serves to show to succeeding navies the safe course they are thereafter to pursue. It is thus that the failures of gifted minds who have preceded us as interpreters, will help us to make nearer approximation to a clear exposition of that beautiful and holy book, which the Spirit of God has written for our learning. If the people would study the Revelation more, their ministers would be likely to indulge in fancies less. It is because you know so little about the book, that ministers have been suffered to make so many misinterpretations of its meaning. You study well its history and contents, ponder prayerfully over its predictions, and your knowledge will be the best check upon the imagination of the minister. Light in the pew necessitates light in the pulpit. The Bible in the hands and hearts of the people is the surest guarantee for truth from the lips of the preacher. I know that some excellent Christians entertain the notion, that their personal salvation is all they have to do with. Far be it from me for one moment to undervalue the necessity of a deep and solemn interest in our personal acceptance before God. What shall it profit a man if he should be able to explain all the mysteries of the prophets, or gain the whole world, and inflict on his soul that loss which never can be retrieved? But, my dear friends, while this is true, and ought to be felt to be true, are we to forget that there is an end even higher than the safety of the soul—not indeed in reference to us, but in reference to God? The glory of God is the end of the universe, and ought to be the first aim of intelligent creatures. If I address members of other communions, let me lay before you a piece of splendid philosophy, as well as true theology, by telling you the first question and answer contained in the catechism which our Scottish children are taught from their earliest infancy. "What is the chief end of man?" Not, to save himself; that is not said. "The chief end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever." We are called on to consult the glory of God first and our salvation next. Yet it is in the pursuit of the former that we never can lose the latter. And whilst, therefore, our personal acceptance before God is an essential thing, which no interest can be a substitute for, which no duty can supersede, we must recollect that if God has revealed a book to evolve His glory, it is not for man, surely not for a Christian to say—"I have no interest in that glory, nor shall I take any part in making the meaning of the mysteries which reflect it intelligible to others."

There are still, however, various classes of interpreters, who take different views of the Apocalypse; and to one or two of these, in this prefatory and explanatory lecture, I would address myself. One class consists of Professor Lee, one of the best Hebrew scholars in England, and Moses Stewart, an able scholar in America, who believe that the whole of the Apocalypse was fulfilled in the first three or four centuries of the Christian church. This belief I think as untenable as it is absurd. Let any person read the Apocalypse, not in the light of criticism, or with the opinions of learned men, but in the exercise of his own unbiassed judgment, and he will see there are prophecies which have not been performed, visions of glory which have never dawned upon our world, and scenes to be realised, and circumstances to evolve, and dates to be reconciled, of which there is no trace in the past, and certainly no appearance in the present.

There is another class of interpreters, however, who take just an opposite view from that of those to whom I have alluded:—these consist of Burgh,

Todd, and Maitland, studious and learned men, who believe, that with the exception of the first three chapters, not one single particular of the rest of the Apocalypse has yet been fulfilled. Moses Stewart and Dr. Lee believe that it was all compressed within the first three or four centuries—Burgh, Todd, and Maitland believe that it must all be compressed into the last three or four years of the Christian era.

There is another class, represented by Mr. Birks, an able and pious writer on the subject of prophecy, and Mr. Elliott, (in a book which will occupy a place, in reference to unfulfilled prophecy, that Newton's *Principia* has occupied in reference to science,) and many other living ministers of the age, who believe that much of the Apocalypse has been fulfilled, but that much more remains yet to be fulfilled; and that it is our duty to review the first, that we may see light shed on the history of the past, and to study the second, that we may learn duties, responsibilities, and privileges, in the prospect of what is yet to come.

I may mention, that some of one class especially, known by the name of Futurists, (that is, persons who believe that the whole of the Apocalypse yet remains to be fulfilled,) are actuated in their views by strong sympathy with Romish tenets—I say so, because it is obvious from their writings, that some of those (though not all) who believe the Apocalypse will be fulfilled entirely in the future, have adopted that reasoning because they love the church of Rome. It has been the belief of the soundest divines, since and before the days of Martin Luther, that the Babylon delineated there, the woman stained with crimes and intoxicated with the blood of the saints, is the great Western apostasy; but these Futurists do not like this interpretation; it rebukes their sympathies; they cannot, however, get rid of the book, and therefore they have tried to get rid of the interpretation, and thus be left free to welcome Rome as their sister, and proclaim the Vatican "Christ's holy home." But it must be evident that all such reasoning is false in its premises, and must therefore be pernicious in its conclusions. And I do think, if you will give me your ears patiently, in the course of a few succeeding Sunday evenings, you will be satisfied that the main views of Mr. Elliott—I do not say all—are as rational as they are scriptural and instructive.

In expounding this book, I must beg to suggest some necessary cautions. We must not seek to be explicit in that which God's Holy Spirit has been pleased to leave dimly revealed. Rash hands must not tear, but sacred hands must reverently draw aside the Apocalyptic veil; we may not "rush in where angels fear to tread;" we must not dogmatize where the Spirit of God has not spoken decidedly. We must be content to be ignorant in many places, thankful to be instructed in others, and patient students throughout the whole.

There is one most important point that I wish to impress upon you, and it is this: we must not do as poor Edward Irving did, pronounce our views of unfulfilled prophecy to be among the essentials of our salvation; we must not give the least countenance to the idea, that the great truths of evangelical religion are at all to be placed in the same category with our views of unfulfilled prophecy. The first seven seals may or may not refer to the decline of the Roman empire, but there is no doubt that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;" the seven last vials may or may not have been begun at the French revolution, but it is undisputably true that "Christ is the propitiation for our sins." The first *may* be true—the last *must* be true; the first is revealed in symbols, the last is clearly brought to light. We may use *peradventures*, when we speak of things that are in the future—we must use none, when we speak of vital and essential truths. I will allow you to differ from me in prophecy—I will allow you to reject my expositions of the Apocalypse, but I cannot for one moment consent that there should be any question whether my Saviour be God, or whether His "blood cleanseth from all sin," or whether His righteousness be my covering, whether His sacrifice be my trust, whether His cross be the only foundation of my safety, and His crown my happy and imperishable hope. All that I say on prophecy may be wrong—what I preach of the Gospel I know to be true; "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day."

Still we are to study the future; just as the Jews clung to their prophecies of a suffering Christ, we Christians should cling to the prophecies of a coming and a glorified Christ. The Jews were taught to look through prophecies to a Christ who was to come and suffer—we ought to look for a



Christ in glory. We are taught to take a retrospective view of His sufferings, and a prospective view of His glory ; and just as the pious Jew was cheered by the prospect of the Saviour's advent, as his sacrifice, so the pious Christian, with his foot upon His cross, and his eye upon the throne, ought to be cheered, sustained, and comforted by the prospect of his Saviour, who is to " come again the second time, without sin unto salvation, unto all them that look for Him." Sound thoughts on prophecy would seem to me to be especially useful in the day in which our lot is cast. Mr. Faber, Mr. Elliott, Dr. McNeile, Mr. Bickersteth, and all who have directed their attention to the subject, believe that we are upon the verge of the last days. All moral, social, and political parties are broken and torn asunder, in order (I believe) to make room for the advent of more glorious things, the triumph of more precious principles ; and it may be, that those will not be least blessed, who shall be found at that day with their loins girt and their lamps burning,

But allow me, whilst remarking upon prophecy, to refer also to the characters that prophecy should interest. I wish not to gratify the curiosity of the unconverted, but to comfort the hearts and instruct the minds of the people of God. You who are strangers to the Gospel, have yet to learn its alphabet ; you must grasp the cross, before you may think about the crown ; you must have your souls cleansed in Christ's atoning blood, before you may venture to anticipate an eternal and happy home.

Let me ask you, then, my dear friends—Are you among the people of God ? Have you ever gone to the Saviour, in the depths of your ruin, in despair of salvation from any other source, and cast yourselves at His feet, and asked for mercy and forgiveness *gratis*, through His precious blood ? Those to whom John wrote the Apocalypse, and whose perusal of it he especially desired, are those, we are told in the very chapter from which my text is taken—are those who sing—" Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, unto Him be glory for ever and ever." Can you say so ? Can you say—" That blood is mine ; that cross is mine ; all things are mine, for I am Christ's, and Christ is God's ?" If the great changes predicted in the Apocalypse do not overtake us, we may be called upon to see personally, each for himself, a change as great. Were that beating heart to stand still, were death to lay his hand upon you this night, were the summons to be issued from the throne—" Cut him down," let me ask you, my dear brother, my dear sister, would it be well with you ? Is all right between God and you ? Do politics occupy your minds ? Do the affairs of your household occupy your minds ? Do thoughts of Mammon occupy your minds ? And have you never sat down, and in the calm and solemn light of heaven asked your conscience that question, to which you must, and ought to give an instant response—" Am I still "dead in sins," or am I "a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven ?"

My dear brethren, I hope no one in this vast assembly is hoping that all is right because he has been baptized, or is a member of a Christian church. My dear friends, do you, can you think that baptism gives to all its subjects new hearts ? Can baptism give you that Divine life, without which you must die for ever ? I believe, that those who think so, misapprehend altogether man's state by nature. If man's state were a mere swoon, or a mere faint from the influence of sin, then a little water sprinkled on his brow from the baptismal font might resuscitate him ; but man is "dead in trespasses and sins ;" and nothing but that voice which shall ring through the sepulchres of the dead, can quicken that soul which is "dead in trespasses and sins." "Christ and Him crucified," the ground of your acceptance ; the Spirit and Him sanctifying, your fitness for heaven ; justification alone, the article of a standing or a falling church ; regeneration by the Spirit of God, the article of a living or a dying church ; our personal safety—our acceptance before God—our title to heaven, and our fitness for its enjoyments, are matters of instant and overwhelming interest. No inquiries into unfulfilled prophecy may be made apologies for indifference here. Whether in the pages of the evangelist, or in those of the seer, it is "the pure in heart" only that "see God." Christians only can understand the Apocalypse ; for them it was written. All other attempts beside, to interpret, must end in fanaticism or folly.

## A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. HENRY CHRISTMAS, M.A., F.R.S., F.S.A.

PREACHED IN VERULAM EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, LAMBETH,  
ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, JULY 21, 1847.

*"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."*—  
Matthew v. 48.

WE endeavoured, in our last discourse from this text, to point out the nature of the perfection here enjoined. We showed that it consists in a continual approach to the Divine nature, a progression which is to go on for ever, and which will make the glory of the blessed, as it causes the delight of those yet in the body. We drew your attention to the fact, that so impartial is the Divine grace, so justly constituted the Divine government, that all may attain the very highest ranks in the Christian host; and as no limit is set to the perfectibility of man's nature, no model can be set before him, save that which is at once human and Divine. But there is another reason why the perfection of the Supreme Being is given as the object of man's imitation. We have not only seen how satisfactory it is in all the circumstances under which he can be placed in this world—we have not only contemplated the active obedience and the resignation of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the best model for man to follow; but when we recollect that this imitation is to be perpetual—that it extends beyond the grave, and is in fact that which distinguishes man from all the intelligent creation—we at once perceive, that were any degree of majesty and purity and perfection, short of the Infinite itself set before man, he would, in the continual progress of his glorified nature, advance not only up to, but even beyond the point proposed. And what end could that now answer, as a model to a being, shining on in a higher and more splendid state? We know not on what terms the angels rejoice in their immortality—we know not whether their places and their glories are fixed from the period of their creation; but if it be so, then will the meanest of Christ's followers hereafter attain unto to a state, on which he shall look down upon the brightest seraph, and the pomp and power of an archangel shall be but as "the small dust in the balance." But if they too share in this ever-during progression—if they also go on from glory to glory, like him who in his extatic vision strode from star to star, to reach the footstool of the throne—still will the stations they now hold, the brightness they now enjoy, be not only reached by the spirits of believers, but be so far transcended, that their glory will be but as the glimmering of a little star, scarce seen through the vast interval that separates them.

But this exalted state, to which the spirit, when clothed with the risen and ethereal body, shall attain, is typified by many kinds of perfection on earth, all which are produced by the same love, and developed by the same dispensation. There was a time when the promise, the great first promise, the open fulfilment of which took place on Calvary, was either forgotten or disbelieved. Man seemed determined to reject salvation, and the world, through this universal rejection, became so awfully corrupt that the deluge swept away from before the face of the Lord all, both man and beast, that had in its nostrils the breath of life. A small remnant was left, and the period of their lives gradually shortened. Happily for us, we know nothing of the iniquity which prevailed before the flood; the memory of their gigantic sins perished in the waters which devoured the sinners, and the feebler race that succeeded seems to have been less energetic, both for good and for evil. We have after the flood pictures of sin dark and desperate; and it is only in the history of the chosen people, who lived under a Divine dispensation, that we find any traces of public or private virtue. We acknowledge that such traces are but small, such instances rare, even among them; but we maintain, that gross and hardened and brutish as the Israelites were, (and a more gross and brutish people it would be impossible to have selected,) even among these so great was the effect wrought by the

Divine dispensation under which they lived, that there was more moral, more social, more political perfection, or rather, a greater advance towards perfection in these things, than among the most enlightened of the nations around them. We do not hesitate to compare the moral, social, and political state of the Jews with that of Greece in its most palmy days, and to claim for the naturally baser Jew an immeasurable advantage.

Our proposition, then, is, that every kind of perfection, in whatever degree it be enjoyed, is the *gift of God*, and man has only to attribute to himself the vices, the folly, and the misery of the world which he inhabits. It is necessary to state clearly and explicitly this fact, because if it be once ascertained, as it easily may, that all perfection on earth, of whatever kind it be, comes through the knowledge which men have obtained of God's will, and consequently (so far as we are concerned) of God's nature—I say, if this be once ascertained, it follows, that the very nature of perfection must consist in imitating the Supreme, and that the Christian must necessarily be the most perfect of mankind, whether it be as a religious or as a moral and social being. We need not be told of the virtues of antiquity; the moral law had been written upon the heart of Adam, and transmitted by tradition among his descendants. It had been proclaimed amid thunders and earthquakes upon Mount Sinai, and it had formed the basis of that burdensome, but magnificent code, by which the Jews were governed. From some one of these sources all nations had access to a knowledge of its precepts, and we are not driven to suppose a moral sense, or to imagine man competent to find out laws for his own government. From God, either directly or through the more indirect medium of tradition, came that knowledge, in consequence of which virtue has been ever approved and vice denounced.

But we exclaim—look at this antiquity, of whose boasted virtues so much has been said; and alas! how dark is the picture it presents to our view! We see children rebelling against their parents, and parents exposing their newly-born children to destruction, to save themselves the trouble and expence of educating and sustaining them; we see slavery in its most diabolical form, and the slave unscrupulously put to death, if thereby he could contribute to the amusement or augment the luxury of his detestable master; we see the husband faithless to the wife, and the wife emulating the licentiousness of her husband; justice daily bought and sold; crimes, which we dare not even name, openly practised without reproach—and to crown the whole, we have but to take a glance within the hovels of the poor, and we shall see them wasting away in the last stages of age, penury, and disease, unwept, unpitied, unrelieved. This is not an exaggerated picture of the vices of an ancient city—and this is our reply to those, who while they deny the doctrine of man's corruption, yet hold the strangely inconsistent opinion of his perfectibility. We cannot at all conceive a state, in which there should be no knowledge from without of God's will; we can with difficulty realise in our mind the condition of the ancient nations, many of whom knew that will only by tradition. In the present day it is infamous openly to violate the laws of morality—it is fashionable to profess religion. From our infancy we hear religion venerated, virtue applauded, and vice condemned; we live in a land of Bibles and churches, of public prayers, of outward devotion, of philanthropy and charity, and we behold the effect which eighteen centuries of Christianity have had. And what is this effect? It is that the exterior of society is humanized and refined, that a coating (as it were) of correct feeling is spread over its surface; and if it do not reach the heart, it yet does penetrate deep enough to work great and still increasing changes. Where of old were the almshouses, the poorhouses, the asylums, the hospitals? Where was the sanctity of the marriage tie, and the due discharge of the social and moral duties? We have already seen the answer to the question, and it is one which will speak conviction to our hearts, that we owe our better state to Christianity. We grant that all this is not religion, but it is notwithstanding the work of the Gospel. It has worked its operation upon the whole mass, and the separate particles are necessitated to follow the rule. It has made many a man sober and chaste and honest, who is far from being a Christian at heart, and who, did the state of society allow him, would be as immoral as he is destitute of religion; but he dares not—he would lose his character, his situation, his business, his worldly advantages; and the good example that he is thus forced to give, operates well, and restrains vice in others. And in this manner is the effect of the Gospel spreading—bringing many to the way of salvation, and compelling the great body of mankind to act more consistently with the laws of morality. The infidel may talk of his public spirit

and his private virtue, but he is a knave and a fool—a knave, because he takes credit to himself for virtues that are forced upon him, and a fool, because he does not, or will not see, that they are forced upon him by the indirect operation of that Christianity which he detests, and which he vainly endeavours to subvert.

If, then, so great be the effect of this dispensation in bringing to perfection society, on which it has but an indirect operation, how far more mighty must it be to perfect the heart of man, upon which it immediately directs its action ! Here is its power indeed wonderful. The reason becomes perfect, for it points out to mankind the necessity of obeying the commandment of the Lord. It shows us that our happiness, both here and hereafter, is alone consulted by a zealous adherence to the doctrines, and a continual practice of the duties of Christianity. Wakened from the delusion in which the worldly mind is plunged, it has a clear view of the future, and is enabled justly to estimate the riches of heaven and earth. And is not this the perfection of reason ? The affections are made perfect, for they are not only sanctified in themselves, but fixed upon heavenly things—things perfect in their own nature, and lovely because approved of by the Lord. The will is made perfect, because though in this world of trial there may remain, there will remain, “a law in our members warring against the law of our minds,” it shall not prevail against us, and our will shall still be to serve the Lord our God.

He, therefore, who accepts the salvation made for him by Christ Jesus has no severe, no harsh command laid upon him, when he is enjoined to be “perfect, even as his Father which is in heaven is perfect.” But there are those, though the instances are rare, in which this gradual change seems superseded by a sudden and energetic operation of the Spirit. They are urged by strong impressions, by a force apparently resistless, “to flee for refuge to the hope set before them.” How often are such persons the object of envy to others, who are willing to say—“Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his,” but who are not willing to make one sacrifice for God, to take up one cross in order to follow Christ ! Indolence, spiritual indolence, is as sure destruction to the soul as worldly indolence is to temporal prosperity. There are too many who admire religion afar off, who know the eternal felicity to which it leads, the damnation to which the want of it will inevitably conduct them ; but they still procrastinate, till perchance the Spirit hath ceased to strive with them, and they are given up to the imaginations of their own hearts. They see some driven (as it were) into the fold of Christ, oppressed with feelings which they are scarcely able to resist, till the broken spirit finds refuge in prayer, and God, through the prayer of faith, heals the sickness of the soul ; they wish that such were the case with themselves—that is, they wish that the Eternal would exempt them from the labour of “working out their own salvation,” that He would *compel* them to be saved, fight their battle against the powers of “the world, the flesh, and the devil,” and leave to them, as to the Israelites of old, only to “stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.” Yes, a religion like this would suit many, who, as it is, stand in peril of the judgment. But is this fulfilling the command—“Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect ?” Is this following the active obedience of our Saviour ? What right have such persons to expect the same treatment from the Divine providence with those placed under widely different circumstances ? They are clear-headed and strong-minded ; they are bound to “search the Scriptures ;” and those Divine oracles that testify of Christ, that speak the requirements of God’s law, the purity of His nature, and the impossibility of seeing Him without holiness—that set forth the fallen and corrupt state of man, and his alienation from God, will, if read with prayer and a humble reliance upon the teaching of the Holy Ghost, demonstrate the impossibility of man’s saving himself, the necessity and effect of repentance, the nature of faith, and the consequences of the atonement ; they will show the efficacy of further waiting upon God, and the certainty of His assistance being granted to those who ask it ; in a word, they will be the means, by “exhortation,” by “reproof,” by “instruction,” by “edification,” “in righteousness,” to make the worldling a man of God, and the man of God perfect and entire.

But there are persons who are not so situated—who are incapable of understanding the doctrines of Scripture. Yet those who cannot have a clear idea in their minds of the Christian scheme, are still capable of feeling its power in their hearts. To them, as well as to others, is the command given—“Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect ;” and assuredly they were not sent into this world without the means of fulfilling the com-

mand. Nor is it at all inconsistent with the impartiality of God, that these His children, who have not the same means of approach to Him as others, should be enlightened by the more immediate operation of His Spirit, that they should be brought to feel that which they cannot see, and drawn to Him by a force exactly proportioned to their intellectual inferiority. It is a subject of merriment to some, to hear the misapplication of Scripture made occasionally by those who are very sincere, and even experienced Christians. It ought to induce us rather, if blessings have come to us in another way, to adore that goodness which provides, though in different manners, equally for all. The Scriptures, in such a case, are not "wrested to destruction;" they are like a medicine, which even if ill applied will have a beneficial effect—they will bring the applicant to salvation. We would not stand forward as the advocates of fanaticism and enthusiasm—we are far from supposing ignorance to be advantageous in spiritual things—but we contend that the command to be "perfect" is binding upon all, and to all are the means given to fulfil it. We contend, that as for the wisest of purposes God has made so many varieties in the human mind, so He has an equal variety of modes, by which His Holy Spirit operates upon it: in a word, that His dealings with every individual are in accordance with the disposition and capacity which that individual possesses. These considerations lead us to believe, that when the reasoning powers are feeble, an appeal will be made to the lower faculties, and that in mercy to the deficiencies of mankind, excitement will be made to supply the place of intellect. We know that in the generality of the human race both will have their effect; and we rarely meet with instances of conversion, on which the appeal to the pure reason is sufficient; in fact, we but seldom find persons capable of properly appreciating such an appeal. On the other hand, it is perhaps equally rare to find instances in which excitement alone has been the instrument of conversion; and then it is only in minds of the lowest order. We just admit the *possibility* of the fact; we do not brand all accounts of sudden and violent conversions with the names of enthusiasm and imposture, because we feel that "all things are possible with God," and He "willeth not that any should perish."

We have thus endeavoured to show, that all men, of whatever mental capacity, are bound to seek, and entitled to expect, that perfection in which the vitality of Christianity consists. We have seen the human perfection of our Lord Jesus Christ proposed to the believer on earth, as the model for his imitation here, and the Divine perfection of Him who is "God over all, blessed for evermore," as the model for the disembodied spirit; and before this, which has an endless existence, a limitless perfectibility, what other could be placed than the infinite, the absolute? We cannot comprehend the perpetual expansion of mind, that in its widening circle shall take in wonder after wonder, glory after glory, of the power and the wisdom and the righteousness and the mercy of the All Holy One; we cannot form any adequate idea of the unceasing increase of awe-struck and reverend love, with which each new display of the Divine perfections will be co-extensive in the glorified spirit—of those ineffable mysteries, on which the soul shall feed, deriving for ever some new addition to its intellectual riches—"for eye hath not seen, neither hath the ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive such good things as God hath prepared for them that love Him;" and with this we must be content, knowing that in the end "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

We have stated that "all things work together for our good," and consequently promote our perfection. What! will it be said—"Did the expulsion of our progenitors from Eden, the curse pronounced upon man, his sentence of temporal death, and his liability to eternal death—did these things work our good? do they tend to promote our perfection? We reply—they do. Adam, like ourselves, was in a state of probation, and had he not fallen we have nothing to assure us that we should have stood firm. The same tempter would have had the same power of tempting us as he had of tempting him; and how dare we say that we could have resisted, or should have resisted His influence? But even supposing we were at this moment in the state from which our first parents fell, there would still remain the question—how far our condition would be better than it is at present; and I believe that we should find, all things considered, that we should rather lose than gain by such an exchange. We should still be liable to fall; and though a continual advance in the perfection of our earthly nature would have been our reward, how inferior would the utmost glories of a continued Eden have been to the starry crown which shall encircle the brows of the ransomed! We have but a few short years of

probation ; and though the days of our pilgrimage be dark and stormy, yet we shall pass through them to a state of transcendent felicity, from which temptation shall be removed, and from which to fall will be impossible. The increase of our sufferings is far, infinitely far more than compensated by the glory that shall follow, and in these latter days the length of our trial has been reduced to threescore years and ten, and generally to a much shorter period. Why, then, should we complain of the sin of Adam ? why lament his fall ? God, who has visited us for His iniquity, has given us advantages which more than counterbalance this His visitation. And what though our life be full of affliction, and the death of the body certain ? The whirlwind of wrath, that may sweep us along our earthly career, shall, if we will but rely upon our faithful Pilot, the more readily drive us to the desired haven.

But there are those who will steer their own vessels in their own way ; who have laid on board a costly cargo of the learning, and the philosophy, and the merits, and the self-sufficiency of this world—alas ! unknowing that when the tempest of wrath cometh, these things will weigh them down to perdition. To you we have but one message. Cast aside these things, though they may be more valuable in your eyes than pearls and gold ; yield the helm to one who knows, and has passed the quicksands of life's ocean, and He shall guide you into all peace. But if you seek not perfection of life here, assuredly you shall not attain to a perfection of glory hereafter. Yet shall ye be made "*perfect*," the day that shall present you before the throne of God, that shall hear the awful sentence pronounced upon you—"Depart, ye cursed"—shall see you perfect in faculties, perfect in powers, perfect in misery ! You shall have a clear sight of the advantages which you have enjoyed, and of your own unspeakable folly in rejecting them—of the unalloyed happiness of the righteous, and of the certainty of your own exclusion therefrom. And whatever we may think of the punishment of the lost, one result, from the very nature of things, is certain—that every moment shall add pungency to their anguish, intensity to their regrets. Oh ! may our perfection be a progress from grace to grace, and from glory to glory !

Lastly, we may notice, that with a Divine command, and with a Divine model for our imitation, we shall, if we apply for it, be assisted with Divine strength. It was a beautiful fiction of the ancient poets, that the gods bestowed upon those whom they loved armour which no mortal weapon could pierce—weapons which no human armour could withstand ; and thus, secure of their own safety, conscious of their own power, did these favourites of heaven rush on to the battle : and unscathed by hostile steel, unterrified by the lance, and the sword, they swept the opposing hosts from before them, and won an easy victory, whoever might be their opponents. But how much more encouraging is the truth to us ! Our armour is equally effectual, for no weapon that is formed against it shall prosper ; our weapons are equally powerful, for the Word of God is "a two-edged sword, that divideth asunder the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow." Our enemies are, it is true, great and terrible ; hell, with its fearful phalanx of apostate spirits—"thrones, and dominions, and principalities and powers"—angels and archangels, are ranked, in dark array, to oppose our way to perfection. But the eye of faith can see that "more are they which are on our side than they which are against us"—can behold the bright orders of celestial combatants—Jesus, "the Captain of our salvation"—the cross, the banner under which we are to conquer. Oh ! could the hand of some higher intelligence touch our eyes, as Ananias did those of Saul, we should behold even now the baffled minions of hell curse the sign and flee ; we should behold the angelic ministers of God's mercy helping from time to time the faint, encouraging the weary ; we should see the open portals of the New Jerusalem continually receiving the radiant train of those who have been faithful unto death ; and we should trace the progressive path of Christian perfection from our own place to the eternal city. But to speak of these things, not only must the scales fall from our eyes, but the string of our tongue must be loosed, and our lips touched with a live coal from the altar, by Him who alone can aid us in our search after perfection.

May it be our happy lot to grow in all the knowledge of the Lord, to "add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity ;" for as "we, according to His promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," let us "be diligent, that we may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless."

NOTES OF LECTURES  
ON  
PROPERTY AND PAUPERISM.  
DELIVERED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
BY THE  
REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.

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LECTURE V.

WERE it not that this question is allied with the moral condition of the people, we would not dwell on it. The salvation of one soul is of more consequence than the salvation of a whole empire from Pauperism, considered only as to its temporal influence. But the Poor Laws are a grievous obstruction to the success of the Christian ministry. The unjustifiable conjunction between the minister and the magistrate, was (we think) pointed out by our Saviour, when He said—"Who made Me a judge or a divider over you?" (Luke xii. 14.) We do not speak of the time consumed, but of the clashing of interests, while the clergyman is seated on the bench of justice, or in the vestry of a pauperised parish. But the Poor Laws form a peculiarly adverse ingredient in the questions he has to consider; and are more pernicious to him than ordinary questions of justice. Either he takes the side of the people, and leads them into the hypocrisy of making a "gain" of "godliness" (1 Timothy vi. 5), and thus becomes the instrument of their degradation; or, if he take the opposite side, what Christian influence can he have, amid all the heart-burnings he has engendered? A compulsory Poor Law is an antichrist in the parish; nor can the latter prosper, till that which "letteth be taken out of the way" (2 Thessalonians ii. 7). Pauperism has a spiritual, as well as a temporal bearing; and the salvation of millions may depend on right views of the subject.

We shall first show the moral influence of the Law of Pauperism in England; and then what is to be done to prevent its introduction into Scotland, and to root it out where it has been introduced;—according to my experience of the matter.

Malthus writes for the species and for the world; and the reader, being directed to the whole globe, escapes from the conclusion that the inhabitants of any country are redundant, by roaming (in imagination) over unpeopled regions. He would lie on his oars till the last acre is cultivated; but it is enough to demand exertion, if the tendency to increase be greater in population than in production. It is no comfort to those suffering in England, that there are uncultivated tracts in New Holland. The people cannot be transported thither in a moment. The distress may be great; but the means of emigration are deficient. Even government can only help to a certain extent; for successive emigrations are like letting out steam by a safety-valve; which does not diminish the internal tendency to keep up a pressure. Malthus's principles are better seen when the ground is narrowed. If he speaks of all the families in the world, we think of the unreclaimed wastes in distant countries, and even of some in this kingdom: but the premature marriage of a son, is deplored by his family as a calamitous event; and, amid the present expense and the rising progeny, it is no comfort to be told of "unreclaimed wastes" at the antipodes. In such a case as this the danger and imprudence are felt; and it is no objection to the theory of Malthus, that these practical lessons were felt long before Malthus's theory was thought of. In like manner, it is better to withdraw our minds from the whole world, and to fix them on a single parish. And here the Poor Laws have the effect of closing its objects round. The peasantry will not emigrate, because they have a claim on the soil: they have property at home, and will not give it up. And it not only checks emigration, but impedes any change from one parish to another;—owing to the dread of new settlers, and their acquiring a right on the soil. But if they be removed, they have their rents

transmitted to them—like non-resident proprietors. Thus the vestry is the nucleus, around which they settle; and this illustrates the theory of Malthus. The parish is like a little world; and we can see the evils in it, without the help of his theory. Our objections are not linked with it, any more than in the case of a premature marriage in a family.

Let us, then, confine our attention to one parish: and apply to plain and practical men, without attending to Malthus at all. In every parish there is a certain quantity of work to be done, and a certain quantity of labourers to do it. If the labourers are barely adequate (in number) to the work, they obtain good wages; if they are redundant their wages are *not* good; and a *small* redundancy causes a *great* reduction of wages. They cannot dispose of the excess to other parishes; owing to the adhesiveness engendered by the Poor Laws. Distress is first felt by the fathers of large families; and hence relief is extended to them beyond the statute of Elizabeth; being added to their wages.\* What they earn, and the number of their family, are taken into account; their wages are eked out; and thus they are made dependent on legal charity, though able-bodied men. This is a premium on population; the married being relieved before single men. The relief is dependent, not on the lowness of the wages, but on the largeness of the family. We need not embarrass the question with Malthus's theory. Here are parents paid on account of the largeness of their family—must not this add to the number of marriages; and, by the prospect of relief, remove hesitation about contracting them? This is the likeliest process for keeping up the redundancy of population; and thus the method adopted to *cure* the disease, is the way to *confirm* it. There is the same feeling all over England that this is not right. In some places they do not give any allowance till there are two or three children; but in other places, where wages are still lower, they begin before. Sometimes the allowance commences at marriage; so that if an unmarried man be refused relief, he marries to obtain it. We cannot escape the fact, that here there is a bounty on marriage. In some places they give both to married and unmarried, though at greater expence, in order to stop the tide of population.

We are not to suppose that all able-bodied workmen are admitted to labour. There is a limit to the work, but not to the workmen, under the present economy: they overflow into total idleness; lounging in the market-place, with nothing to do. One expedient is to send them round to the farmers for low wages; the parish paying the rest. In order to accommodate them, thrashing-machines are put down, and a coarser agriculture is introduced,—so as to require a greater exercise of muscles; and, all attempts failing, they settle down into supernumeraries. Sometimes they are set to work, by the overseers, in the workhouse; which is sometimes farmed out, and turned into a factory; being brought to auction, and hammered off to the highest bidder; who gets the labour under market-price. Sometimes they are set to work on roads; more for the moral than the physical effect.

The law between master and servant is distempered; for, the law having given the latter a right to relief, he is not anxious to get employment. As the desire of *gaining* employment is lessened, so is the desire of *keeping* it; and, as the servant cares little about dismissal, the master loses his hold upon him: hence the harassments and heart-burnings between a master who has no authority, and a servant who is under no dependence. The latter keeps the former in subjection; for the master cannot go to other parishes for labourers, without turning other men out of employment, to be maintained by Rates to which he himself contributes. This is understood by the labourers, who act accordingly. After all, the employment is an apology for idleness. It is common for the labourers to do nothing, for hours together; saying—"Our master has got all the work he has paid for; the rest of our time, being paid for by the parish, is our own." They lose the tone of good labourers, and that wholesome discipline of rewards and punishments imposed by nature.

A melancholy process of deterioration is connected with this system. As the boys *rear* towards manhood, they swell the competition for labour. Regular servants are better thought of than "roundsmen;" vacancies among the former are filled up from the latter, while the boys are placed among the "roundsmen;" which is ruinous to their own habits, and augments the tide of corruption. It is unfortunate that they should commence their lives as paupers; and should be so fostered as to exceed their parents in meanness, rapacity, and the sordid habits of pauperism. It is the same whether they are

\* The New Poor Law has remedied this and other abuses dwelt on in this Lecture.



employed as roundsmen, or in the workhouse. The whole system is a vast nursery of idleness and vice. We do not hesitate to charge the Poor Laws with the vast majority of crimes. They lure more into existence than they can provide for; and leave them time to prepare for the commission of crime. If labour were better paid, the state of things would be different. It looks humane and liberal to oblige a parish to support those who cannot obtain regular employment; but if legislation would let humanity alone, it would be more effective. A small excess of workmen brings a great discomfort and deficiency on all. On a slight change of numbers it depends whether a master shall seek for servants, or servants for a master. It is a tremulous balance, which a little would decide. Under the guise of kindness, the comfort of all the labourers is reduced. They are ground down to starvation by a malignant system, which bears on its face a smile of kindness; and in behalf of which the sweetest poetry has poured its dulcet strains into the ears of weeping sentimentalism.

We do not need the ponderous theory of Malthus to prove the connection between too early marriages and too large families; and that there are more people in our parishes than can find employment. The question is not about the right economy for the *globe*, or for the whole *empire*; but for each *parish*. It would be a very crude speculation, to say at what age people should marry; but it is not known how short a postponement of the average period, would relieve the distress from the pressure of over-population; and, without each being bound down to this average, there would still be secured a sufficient postponement on the whole.\*

\* The "Compulsory Provision for the Indigent" forms Chapter 14 of Dr. Chalmers's "Political Economy in connexion with the Moral State and Moral Prospects of Society." (See Volume 19 of his Works, Page 400.) As it follows a different track from that pursued in this Lecture, it may be consulted with advantage.

## HEAVEN.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. GEORGE FISK, LL.B.

PREACHED IN CHRIST CHAPEL, MAIDA HILL,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, APRIL 11, 1847.

*"At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—Matthew xviii. 1—3.*

THE primary lesson which we are here taught to observe, dear brethren, is humility; and we all need to learn it. The disciples, though men in humble circumstances, were yet ambitious men—men desirous of distinction. They had looked for an earthly kingdom; and when our Lord had taught them somewhat concerning a heavenly kingdom, and they had begun to build up some hopes in reference to a participation in that kingdom, the inquiry was—'Who shall be exalted above others?' More than that—'Who shall be the greatest?' Perhaps each of the twelve was equally desirous of pre-eminence and distinction. Such is our poor nature, even when grace is acting upon the heart. Now our Lord knew this, and taught them, in immediate connection with the subject, the most important practical truth in the Bible, and intimated to them that instead of inquiring who should be the greatest in the kingdom, they should rather inquire—how shall a man who is a sinner enter the kingdom? And He intimated that a change was necessary, even for them; for though they were sincere-hearted men, who had left all and followed Him, there was a process which even they needed to undergo, before they could ever enter within the boundary of the kingdom.

The subject admits of a further application. Most men believe that there is a heavenly state, and a state of wretchedness unspeakable; and whatever impression the truth may make upon their minds, or whether it make an impression at all, they still entertain such a persuasion as will not admit of denial, that all and each must have an allotment for eternity, in the one state or in the other. The intentions of the great majority of mankind, if expressed audibly in words, would be on the side of embracing the glories and the blessedness of the heavenly state. I cannot conceive it possible that an immortal creature, with a sense of responsibility, should avow himself deliberately to be a candidate for the opposite state of eternal wretchedness and degradation and torment; the very self-love of man would prevent it. And yet the vast majority of mankind are as totally unmoved and undecided, in reference to this matter, as if God had never spoken, had never in some degree unveiled the glories of heaven, and had never to some extent exhibited hell without a covering.

Dear brethren, may the Spirit of God accompany the Word spoken to-night, that the eternal interests of some one soul present may be secured, and that

some wanderer from God may become a candidate for the holy and blessed inheritance, while I endeavour, in the first place, to set before you somewhat of the scriptural idea of the heavenly state; and secondly, the indispensable qualification for it.

May the Holy Spirit guide my heart and conscience, and enable me to speak to your hearts and consciences the truth of God!

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

I. First, then, somewhat of the scriptural idea of the heavenly state.

Little indeed does Holy Scripture contain of a clear and explicit kind, in reference to the nature of the heavenly state; but yet there are expressions, which when carefully weighed and rightly understood in their signification, do convey some definite ideas. Perhaps the expression which occurs in our text, though a figurative one, serves this purpose well. You are aware, dear brethren, that the term "kingdom of heaven," "kingdom of God," occurs frequently in Holy Scripture. Sometimes it means the Gospel dispensation, sometimes the power of God's grace in that dispensation upon the heart of the individual. Thus we read—"Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" that is, the Gospel dispensation. Here you have an instance of the former. And our Lord himself says—"The kingdom of God is within you." Here you have an instance of the latter. But it seems plain that "the kingdom of heaven" mentioned in our text is not to be taken in either of these two senses; and the context, I think, would lead us at once to assume, that it refers to the heavenly state; and there are various other passages in the Holy Scripture, where the expression is unquestionably used in that sense.

Now if this be so, the heavenly state is here symbolised to us under the very striking figure of a kingdom, and a kingdom of a heavenly nature, a kingdom which shall be characterised by that which characterises heaven itself. Let us look at two or three instances. In the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, at the thirty-first and following verses, we read of "the coming of the Son of Man in His glory, and His holy angels with Him," and He is spoken of as "sitting on the throne of His glory, and gathering before Him all nations"—as "separating the sheep from the goats," and as "setting the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left;" and afterwards it is said—"Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This is evidently the heavenly state, of which the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, during the millennial period, shall be the commencement. Take another passage; in the twelfth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, at the twenty-eighth verse, we read—"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace," while we are here upon earth, waiting for the kingdom, "whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." "We receiving a kingdom." They who had received the kingdom of grace in their hearts first, by faith, at the foot of the cross, and who were thereby made suitable candidates for the glorious kingdom yet to be revealed. Next, in the epistle of James, in the second chapter, at the fifth verse, we read—"Hearken, my beloved brethren: hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?"—simply those in whose hearts the kingdom of grace has been established, upon whom the Spirit of God has descended and enabled them to accept the kingdom, in like manner, at the foot of the cross of Jesus; these are they that love Him, and only these; and these, we are told, are "heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised." They are not in possession of the kingdom; it is something for which they are waiting, as an heir is

waiting for the possession which depends upon the death of his ancestor. They have the title to the kingdom now, but they wait for the kingdom to be put in possession hereafter ; and therefore we conclude that it is a heavenly kingdom. Again ; in the second epistle general of Peter, the first chapter, and the tenth and eleventh verses, we read—" Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure : for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall : for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." In another place, we are termed brethren—brethren who have been called, brethren who have been elected, for we are desired to "make our calling and election sure." They are believers, then, in whose hearts the kingdom of grace has been established ; and it is the glorious and everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ that they are waiting for.

Here we have undoubtedly a series of expressions, all bearing upon the same point ; and when our Lord in the text says—" Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in nowise enter the kingdom of heaven," He doubtless means—" Ye shall not enter into that eternal state of blessedness, which is here set forth under the striking and most interesting epithet of a " kingdom." "

Now what are the principal ideas suggested by this metaphorical expression ?

The first is elevation. He who enters into the kingdom has a share in it, is elevated to the dignity of it. The dust of the earth is lifted up to heaven ; the rebel becomes a sharer of the sovereign's glory ; the alien is brought into near and indissoluble union with the monarch ; and however humble the position of the true believer may be, he is exalted to a royal dignity,—for you remember, in the first chapter of the book of Revelation, believers have royalty ascribed to them, where it is said—" Christ hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father." And again, in the twenty-second chapter of the book of Revelation we find it declared, that they who are qualified to partake of the kingdom " shall reign for ever and ever." In the heavenly state, then, dear brethren, there will be elevation ; not elevation in the condition of one creature over another creature, but the elevation of the creature to the dignity of the royal presence of his God and Father.

Connected with such elevation we must associate the idea of holiness. Dear brethren, no unholy thing can enter there ; nothing in the heavenly state can admit of affinity with the corruptions of earth ; sin, not only in its consequences, but in its nature, is to be not merely brought into subjection, but it is to be killed and destroyed. Dear brethren, we believe that the cross of the Redeemer has so given the blow to sin, that the day shall come in which the universe shall say—" Behold, it is not." Into the kingdom it can never come. If God should permit sin to be still active in hell's depths—if uncrushed sin should hold the whip of scorpions, with which to lash the disloyal ones from God, throughout the countless ages of eternity—and it may be so—yet it will never enter heaven ; it shall not be there. Holiness—" holiness to the Lord" shall be the characteristic of the heavenly state ; its very atmosphere shall be Deity ; the very brightness of it shall be Deity ; every sight and every sound shall be Deity ; Deity shall be the canopy and the firmament, and Deity shall be the basis and the foundation ; Deity shall pervade the kingdom, creating the holiness which it loves.

Then we must associate the idea of happiness. Ah ! dear brethren, the idea of happiness is connected not merely with elevation, but with holiness : the happiness and elevation are just incidental to the other, though positively elementary parts of the kingdom. We shall not be happy in the kingdom because elevated, nor because we shall reign as kings and priests, but we shall be happy because being " kings and priests" and having " washed our

robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," we shall be holy. Happiness! How little does the word mean, when used in its ordinary sense! The absence of grief is with us often happiness—just as the absence of pain is often pleasure. The broken heart that pauses in its tears, while some bright dream of the imagination passes through the mind, is often happy. All our happiness is but a modified and imperfect thing, even at its height. It trembles like an aspen leaf: even when its bright waters are flowing most brightly, there is a turbid undercurrent preparing to disturb its tranquillity. All may be of the brightest—the heart may be sending up its sweet song of joy—another moment passes, and the heart is riven, the sources of happiness are dried up, the foundations are rased; and at best it is a poor unstable thing. But such is not the happiness which we associate with the idea of the happiness of heaven—perfect, unchangeable, with which nothing shall interfere; its sources never dry, its bright waters never turbid, its intense light never darkened.

Then we associate the idea of safety. If no evil shall come into the kingdom, then danger shall not come into it. Safety in the everlasting covenant of God's love—safety in the arms of the Redeemer—safety in the fulfilled promises of God, every one of which will have become "yea," and none of them nay, will constitute one of the sweet and blessed elements of heaven's lustre and glory. Safety! Dear brethren, the Christian who realises most of the Christian's sense of safety in the covenant, experiences moments of apprehension and fear and dread; the currents of temptation set in strongly against him, the hurricanes of temptation blow against him; and remember it is written—"Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." He sometimes mistakes his steps; he fears that Satan may lead him to the edge of that dangerous precipice, from which to fall would be his ruin. Oh! how sadly is the Christian's sense of safety invaded, while he is on earth! But in heaven there is no such invasion; the bulwarks of everlasting love surround the kingdom, and the will of God's sovereignty gives stability to the foundation.

Then we think there will be in the kingdom entire conformity to the Divine will. We cannot now understand the conformity between the redeemed church of God and the Redeemer himself, which all the expressions of Scripture would lead us to expect will take place in the heavenly state. On earth the true believer experiences something like this; but it is imperfect. Sometimes there is a surrender of the will, and all is calm within; sometimes the will puts on its strength and strives against God for the mastery, and then the conflict, painful and distressing, fills the believer's heart with disquietude, and makes him cry—"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But in the heavenly state it shall not be so; the will of God shall then supply the rule, shall suggest the end, shall move all the springs of action in every redeemed soul, and the unbroken harmony of the Divine will shall roll its rich diapason, through the countless ages of eternity.

Then we think there will be realisation of the Divine presence—realization of God as our God in Christ—realization of our relation to God in Christ—realization of the fact, that as God and the eternal Son are one, so we in the Son and through Him are one—partakers, in some marvellous sense, of the Divine nature—"filled with all the fulness of God."

Such, then, dear brethren, we think, without further addition, is something of the Scriptural idea of the heavenly state. I would not draw imaginary pictures, or deal out idle fancies, in such matters; but these are the immediate suggestions from the expressions of Holy Scripture, particularly that of our text.

II. Then for such a state there must needs be qualifications; we cannot deny this. And there is a qualification which is indispensable. Dear brethren, neither dignity, nor rank, nor fortune, nor earthly possession, nor intellect, nor all that men possess to elevate and ennoble, can fill the place of this indispensable qualification. And this is the second particular, to which I would draw your attention. "Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The statute is recorded with God's own finger; an unconverted man cannot, shall not, enter the kingdom of heaven. This is the indispensable qualification, then—that ye be converted. And what is conversion? Is it profession? Is it a competent knowledge of Divine truth? Is it an acquaintance with the Bible? Is it a state of high moral perfection? Does it consist in maintaining a high and an honourable character? Is it a thing that of necessity wins the applause of men as men, and of the world as the world? Nay, dear brethren, all these things may exist, and in themselves are valuable and excellent, but they are not conversion. Conversion, as the very term implies, is an entire change of our whole moral and intelligent being. It is the work of Almighty grace; it is the re-creating energy, applied by Him who spake the universe into existence, and fixed and established the everlasting laws by which every atom of creation is governed and sustained. Dear brethren, the conversion to which our Lord refers, is the work of Omnipotence, and cannot be effected, without the exercise of the Divine power. And it must be entire. Suppose it were possible for one who has not undergone this change to enter the precincts of the kingdom—why, the very harmonies of heaven would but awaken wretchedness in his heart, and the holiness and the happiness, and the conformity with the Divine will and the glory of the Divine presence, would be all unsuited to him. As well might the blind man profess to delight in colours, and the deaf in sweet sounds, as the unconverted man to have a taste or an appetite or a desire after heaven's elevation and holiness and happiness.

The change, then, must be a complete one. And when God by His Holy Spirit begins the work, He always completes it. As the apostle to the Philippians testifies: "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." Conversion may be quick and sudden, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus and the jailer of Philippi; the one is thrown down to the earth, when going forth to persecute the truth which he afterwards embraced and preached, and in an instant the heart is broken and the enquiry is—"Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?"—"Lo! I surrender my will to Thine;" and in the other, with strange and fearful elementary commotions, shaking the very foundations of the prison, the guilty man is smitten—the finger of the Spirit of God is upon him, and trembling and astounded he cries out—"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Or the change may be progressive, as we think was the case with Lydia. It pleased the Lord to open this woman's heart, that she might receive the things that were spoken of Paul. The others' hearts were sorely touched—Lydia's heart was gently affected. It would seem probable, that step by step the work of conversion was carried on, and that all three, in their various circumstances, experienced the same result; they were "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." And that is conversion.

Conversion, dear brethren, is not sanctification; conversion, or a state of conversion, is that state into which a guilty sinner is brought, when justified as a sinner, by faith, resting upon the covenant made valid by the merits of Jesus; when God ceases to impute sin and imputes righteousness, receives him into His family, and sets him apart, as a chosen vessel, for Himself—to be

filled with Himself, and to manifest the power of His grace by an active spirit of holiness, thereafter to be fostered and cherished, as it is abundantly bestowed.

Such is the simple idea of conversion. We may find in books of theology many particulars, many ingredients, brought out in minute detail; but speaking comprehensively upon the subject, such it is—a work of Omnipotence, changing the desires, the affections, the powers, the will, the tendencies, and at length bringing the whole being into entire subjection to God: elevated while on earth, holy while on earth, happy while on earth, safe while on earth, conformed to the will of God while on earth, and enjoying the Divine presence while on earth; in fact, heaven is begun on earth, and he who shall share the glories of the kingdom hereafter, has already the kingdom of God within him—as we have seen.

The work of conversion, dear brethren, begins by the Spirit convincing the sinner of his lost state, humbling him under a sense of sin, showing him his helplessness, to save himself, convincing him that if saved at all it must be by grace, through faith, and not through any merit in his own doings; and these bringing him, in all the bankruptcy of his ruined state, to the foot of the cross of Him who was “delivered for his offences, and raised again for his justification.” And this indispensable qualification for the kingdom may be begun in some hard heart now listening to these things—may be begun to-night in the solitary hour of midnight, when the great world is hushed, and God is moving forth to His secret work, and He may seek and find that poor guilty wanderer from Himself, and may speak to Him by His Spirit and tell him—“I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and therefore with the cords of tenderness and love I have drawn thee;” and the answer of that hard heart this night may be—“Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.” “Search me, and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Dear brethren, were I to put the plain question—‘Are you candidates for the kingdom?’—what reply would each individual, as before God, be prepared to render? “Those who profess to be candidates for the kingdom—are you seeking it in God’s way? Have you realised, or are you earnestly using the means for realising that change which is indispensable, and which cannot be done away with? Are you seeking the kingdom as God would have you seek it—not only as to the way of seeking it, but also through His appointed means? Do you come to the house of God, seeking the kingdom? Do you go into your retirement, with the written word in your hands, seeking the kingdom there? Do you go, in the spirit of prayer, to the throne of grace, there seeking the kingdom? Do you go weeping over the sufferings of Him who bled for your sins, and through Him seek the kingdom? Do you look up to “the blood of sprinkling,” which “speaketh better things than the blood of Abel,” and through its cleansing influence do you expect to obtain a qualification for the kingdom? Ah! dear brethren, those who have begun to seek, those who are rejoicing in all the blessedness of heirship, press onward; the toils of the way will soon be past, and the dreariness of earth’s best existence will soon be changed for the hosannahs and palms and white robes.

And ye who are desirous, but have never yet come to that point of decision which gives earnestness to men, be advised when we speak to you, with all the tenderness of love, and bid you count all things but dross, when compared with this kingdom. Let not time fly by; let not the poor shadows, which the god of this world would have you pleased with, rather than with the realities which are now set before you, divert you from your object; but “lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset you, and run with patience the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith.”

## THE MINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

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AT PRESENT OFFICIATING IN EXETER HALL.

*“ But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance ; which glory was to be done away : how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious ? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.”—2 Corinthians iii. 7—10.*

THE apostle argues that the Levitical dispensation was “glorious.” It was so : it was given on Sinai, amid pomp and unearthly splendour. So much so, that the very face of Moses shone with glory, from its contact with the presence of Deity. The ministration of the Spirit (that is, the evangelical economy,) is yet more so. The first was the ministration of death—“the soul that sinneth, it shall die :” the second is the communication of life. The one presented a rigid and inflexible law—the other imparts a plastic and transforming principle ; the first was engraven on stone—the last on the living tablets of the heart. The ministration of the law was essentially transitory ; its lightnings are now laid, its thunders lulled, its tables broken, and its whole structure and economy dissolved : but the ministration of the Spirit is to stretch into everlasting ages, to add to the brightness of heaven, and to give tone and colouring to the thoughts and praises of the redeemed throughout eternity.

But the ministration of the Spirit is not here placed in antagonism to the ministration of the law, as if the one were contrary to the other. It is not so. On the contrary, the one is the complement of the other : the first is the bud, and the last is the full blossom ; the one is a series of types—the other, of truths ; the one presents us with the patriarch at his altar, the Jew in his temple, and the priest in his holy place—the other gives us the preacher in his pulpit, the hearer in his pew, and the great High Priest, who has passed into the heavens. External rites have passed away, like clouds from the sky, but eternal truths, struck into the heart, remain, like the stars, for ever. The altars of Judaism have been abandoned, its victims have ceased to bleed, and the Holy Spirit now preaches and points to the great oblation made once for all for the sins of mankind. Moses is no longer read in the synagogue, but Christ is preached in the church ; the priest no longer burns incense within the veil, but the Redeemer intercedes in heaven ; Sinai emits no more thunders, but the “still small voice” is yet audible to the people of God ; the lightnings that flash despair are no more seen, but “the light of God’s countenance” is still “lifted up” upon His saints. In short, there has been progress in God’s revelation of his will—that progress which is visible in creation. For is not the earth a vast laboratory ? are not islands emerging from the deep ? are not new shapes and forms of crystallization taking place ? do not all things work upward towards perfection ?



It is not, however, meant to be alleged, that the Holy Spirit was not in the former dispensation. It was true in the days of Abraham, just as it is true now—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." There was never but one church, and there never was but one way of turning sinners into saints; there never was but one spring of life, one element of victory, one source of sanctification—the Holy Spirit of God.

Wherein, it may be asked, then, was the difference? We answer, it was in degree, not in kind. There is "first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn;" the spring leaps from the hill side, and swells into the river, that bears on its bosom the navy of the empire, and the treasures of the earth. And these are but the just illustrations of the progress of the kingdom of Christ, from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Moses, from Moses to Paul, and from Paul to Luther. The one dispensation was the grub in its chrysalis state—the other the beautiful butterfly, unfurling its wings, and sailing in the air, a thing of life. We have far greater light, more glorious privileges, more inspiring hopes; the glory of the dispensation of the Spirit is as much superior to that of the dispensation of the law, as is the glory of that city that hath no need of the sun nor of the moon, to that of the earthly Canaan; and if there be no nobler nor more illustrious specimens of Christianity now than of old, it is our sin and our shame, and nothing else.

The superiority of our dispensation to the previous one will be seen in such points of view as the following. We have, in the Gospel dispensation, views of God far more beautiful, consolatory, and clear. In the dispensation of the law the Father was clouded with the awful drapery of the Judge; His very presence shook the earth, and made even Moses tremble; the flaming sword of the cherubim needed to be passed under, before the hungry could eat of the tree of life. But in the evangelical dispensation "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing to men their trespasses"—and "the Spirit of adoption," which we receive, helps us to see, and to say—"Abba, Father." It is written upon its very lintels and door posts, as its great central truth—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

If we look to the worship of the old dispensation, as contrasted with that of the new, we shall see the superior glory of the latter. The one had a heavy and costly ceremonial, fitted to awe and dazzle men's senses—the latter a simple and sublime service, calculated to reach and captivate men's hearts; the one possessed an outward Leviticus, with rigid rubrics—the other is characterized by an inward and spiritual worship. The Jewish church was "all glorious without"—the Christian church is "all glorious within." All that the former had materially, the latter has morally. Truth, the lamp of the holy place—life, the rubric—love, the ritual—all hours canonical, and all places holy—every day an anniversary, and every spot a shrine. The one, in short, was the letter—the other is, in one word, the life.

If we look at the place of worship, we shall see also another evidence of the superior glory of our dispensation. The temple was the central object of the former, with its mercy seat, and its shechinah, and its overshadowing cherubim, and its other impressive furniture. Have we anything to correspond to this? We have that which infinitely eclipses it. I do not quote those vast and truly magnificent structures, our cathedrals, where the very stones of the earth seem to have had life, and to have shot up into foliage and blossom; but we have what Christ himself pronounced to be the true temple—His own holy and perfect humanity; and wheresoever, in the poorest cellar, or in gorgeous hall, or in royal palace, or in rags, in ermine, in lawn, or in purple, you find a true Christian, you find a true temple, beside which cathedrals, shrines, and synagogues, the temple of Solomon, with all its glory,

and the temple of Herod, with all its augmented magnificence, become dim and pale—for that true Christian is “the temple of the Holy Ghost.”

The Jew had also his high priest, a Divine and august institution; but we have a far more glorious Priest. The Jewish high priest offered first for his own sins, then for the sins of the people, and eventually died; but we have a High Priest, who has “passed into the heavens,” and liveth for ever, “holy, harmless, and undefiled,” arrayed in the imperishable robes of our humanity—our names upon His heart, and our souls in His hand. The shadow, in short, is absorbed in the eternal substance; the star that was beautiful, but dim and distant, and without any mellowing power, is lost in the full-orbed splendour of the unsetting sun; the rite has perished, but the religion remains; the ceremony has “waxed old as doth a garment, and as a vesture it is folded up,” but the Son of God is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” “If, then, the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.”

The former dispensation had its sacrifices, but this was their imperfection, that the same sacrifice was oftentimes offered, and could not take away sin. They had the morning and the evening lamb, the lamb of Levi—we have “the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world;” the Jew had his paschal lamb, that was offered once a year—we have “Christ our pass-over, sacrificed for us.” Our sacrifice needs no repetition, and is capable of no increase. Its retrospective efficacy reached Adam, amid the *debris* of Paradise—its present efficacy comprehends the round globe, as with a glorious zone, and its prospective blessings are inexpressible now, as they will be unexhausted throughout eternity.

But who is the Spirit, whose ministration we have been considering?

First, we allege, He is a Person; and secondly, that person is God. The following passages are evidences that He is a person, and not (as the Socinian alleges) an influence, a metaphor, or a figure of speech. Isaiah xlvi. 16—“Come ye near unto Me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and His Spirit, hath sent Me.” Acts viii. 29—“Then the Spirit *said* unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” Acts xvi. 16—“Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.” 1 Cor. ii. 10—“But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit *searcheth* all things, yea, the deep things of God.” These, surely, are not the effects of a metaphor; surely it would be doing violence, alike to the writers and to the language they employ, to suppose that any other than a person is alluded to. The Spirit is represented as *speaking* in the prophets and the apostles. Mark xiii. 11—“But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.” Luke i. 67—“And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied.” 1 Peter i. 10, 11—“Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” 2 Peter i. 21—“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved

by the Holy Ghost." The Spirit is represented as *striving*. Genesis vi. 3—"And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh." *Reproving*. John xvi. 8—"And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." *Helping*. Romans viii. 26—"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." *Guiding*. John xvi. 13—"Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come." *Bearing witness*. 1 John v. 6—"It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." *Testifying*. John xv. 26—"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me." *Working*. 1 Corinthians xii. 11—"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." He is grieved. Ephesians iv. 30—"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." He is *resisted*. Acts vii. 51—"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." He is *tempted*. Acts v. 9—"Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" We are baptised in His name, and blessed in His name. All these and other acts, attributed to the Spirit of God, constitute irrefragable proof that He is a person.

In the next place, He is God. Compare Exodus xvii. 7—"And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?"—with Hebrews iii. 7—9—"Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years." Thus the Holy Ghost was tempted in the wilderness. He is therefore Jehovah. Compare also Isaiah vi. 5—9—"Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And He said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not:"—with Acts xxviii. 25, 26—"And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive." Simeon's song is addressed to the Holy Spirit. It was revealed to him by the Spirit that he should not depart, till he had seen the Lord's Christ; and in his song he addresses the Divine Person that made this promise to him, (that is, the Holy Spirit,) and acknowledges that the promise was fulfilled. If we compare the third and fourth verses of the fifth chapter of the Acts, we shall see that to lie to God and to lie to the Holy Ghost are convertible and equivalent expressions: "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto

men, but unto God." In Ezekiel the Spirit gives life to the dry bones; in Romans viii. 11, we read—"The Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies."

John iii. 6—"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." 1 John v. 4—"Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." Here we see that to be born of the Spirit, and to be born of God, is the same thing.

Acts xiii. 2—"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Hebrews v. 4—"And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." Here we see the Spirit doing what is declared to be the exclusive prerogative of God.

Matthew ix. 38—"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." Acts xiii. 4—"So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Selucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus." This is evidence not only of an attribute of God being declared to be an attribute of the Holy Spirit, but also of worship being paid to Him.

John xiv. 17—"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." 1 Corinthians xiv. 25—"And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." These two passages show that the Spirit of truth and the indwelling God are one and the same Being.

2 Timothy iii. 16—"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." 1 Peter i. 12—"Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." Thus inspiration, the prerogative of God, is declared to be the prerogative of the Holy Ghost.

John vi. 45—"It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God." 1 Corinthians ii. 13—"Which things we also speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." John xiv. 26—"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Thus the prophecy that Christians "shall be taught of God," is fulfilled in the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

Acts v. 3—"But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?" Acts v. 4—"Whiles it remained was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." Thus the perfect identity of God and the Holy Ghost is affirmed.

1 Corinthians ii. 11—"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." 1 Corinthians ii. 14—"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him." These two texts show that the things of God, and the things of the Spirit of God, are the things of one Person.

Deuteronomy vi. 16—"Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted him in Massah." Acts v. 9—"Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" Thus to tempt the Spirit of God is the same thing as to tempt God.

In Ezekiel xxxvii. 9—"Then said He unto me, Prophecy unto the wind;

prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God ; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live"—the Spirit of God is represented as the great quickener of the dead.

In Acts ii. 24—"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death,"—1 Peter iii. 18—"Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but quickened by the Spirit,"—Romans i. 4—"And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead,"—the Holy Spirit is set forth as raising Christ from the dead.

In Matthew xii. 28—"But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you,"—Luke xi. 20—"But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you,"—Acts xix. 11—"And God wrought special miracles by the hand of Paul,"—Romans xv. 19—"Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God,"—the Spirit is represented as the source of all miraculous power.

In 1 Corinthians iii. 17—"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy ; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are,"—John xiv. 17—"Even the Spirit of truth ; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him : but ye know Him ; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you,"—He is represented as dwelling in the people of God.

Now is it possible to conceive, that He who is thus identified with God in every word of truth, in every act of power, is any other than God ? Is it possible to believe, that He who gives life to the dead soul, raises from the tomb the dead body, inspires Scripture, performs miracles, gives ministers to the church, and dwells in all saints, at all times, and in all places of the world, is any other than God ? To change the heart is a more stupendous exercise of power than to create the universe. To mould and shape yielding matter into countless forms of beauty, into suns and stars and minerals and flowers, is beyond all dispute the evidence of the finger of God ; but to allay evil passions, to dethrone corruption from the human heart, to transform by a touch the heart of stone into a heart of flesh, and to construct from the ruins of the soul a residence for Deity, is an expression of yet greater power. A saint is a monument of greater might than a fixed star ; a Christian is a more glorious thing than creation itself.

In the epistle to the Hebrews the Spirit is represented as having the attribute of eternity, where Christ is said to have "offered Himself through the eternal Spirit." We are baptised in His name, we are blessed in His name, we are taught by His wisdom, we are comforted by His consolations. None is able to do all this, save He who is God.

If, then, we revert to the banks of the ancient Jordan, and the baptism of Jesus, or if we refer to our own baptism, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," or if we look forward to the Apocalyptic description of the sevenfold Spirit, we must conclude that the Holy Spirit is God. God the Father is sovereign love, God the Son is redeeming love, God the Spirit is effective love ; "God," the triune Jehovah, "is love." This is the foundation of the Christian faith, the hope of Christian men, and the main element of that superior glory which makes "the ministration of righteousness" exceed in glory "the ministration of condemnation ;" "for if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." And may we all, according to the declaration contained in the last verse of the chapter from which my text is taken, "with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

## THE DOOR SHUT.

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### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. JAMES PARSONS.

PREACHED IN ST. THOMAS'S SQUARE CHAPEL, MARK STREET, HACKNEY,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, MAY 16, 1847.

Before making a collection in behalf of the London Missionary Society.

*"When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door."*—  
Luke xiii. 25.

It is impossible, my brethren, to acquire a knowledge of the character and habits of men, without observing their uniform proneness to neglect the welfare of their own souls. The high and solemn concerns of religion plead uselessly and in vain. By some they are dismissed with open infidelity and scorn; and by many more, who venture not upon so open and direct opposition, they are evaded in a manner which is equally sinful and perilous. Such is the mode, in which the majority of men treat those mighty concerns which apply to their well being, and the importance of which advances with every day.

One method of evasion upon the concerns of religion, and perhaps the most frequent of all, is doubtless that of professing some interest when its claims are presented, but endeavouring to elude its personal application, by engaging in inquiries or in debates which are in general, and as far as anything connected with religion can be concerned, of a merely speculative nature. A striking example of this is presented in connection with the words of our text. We find that the Saviour went through the cities and villages of Galilee, teaching and journeying towards Jerusalem, and doubtless repeating those solemn adjurations to repentance which we find recorded in the earlier part of the chapter, and of which so large a portion of His public ministry was composed. A person who had listened to His stirring declarations, and who must be regarded as a representative of the feelings of multitudes, desired to prevent their continuance and to evade their pressure, by presenting an inquiry which if responded to might have produced a mere fruitless and unprofitable discussion. "Then said one unto Him, Lord, are there few that be saved?" The manner in which the attempt was met was worthy of Him who "spake as never man spake;" for in place of directly noticing the inquiry, He returned at once, and with new force, to the task of summoning each man to the work of his own individual welfare, uttering a series of expressions which for united majesty and pathos will perhaps be found unparalleled, even in His own peerless ministry. "He said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not, whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets. But He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and

Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last."

From these thrilling sentences we have selected expressions which are brief in their measure, though most comprehensive in their extent. It is our hope that you will not suffer that great Institution, the interests of which have convened us this evening, to endure loss, because we are about to dedicate this service to matters immediately connected with your own personal interests and welfare; and if we are speaking to any who have been in the habit of indulging in procrastination and delay, upon the matters of eternity, let this be the time for rebuke and the period for resolve, lest, by that delusive procrastination upon matters which with every moment are becoming more important, they should lose their immortal souls.

We desire, then, your most serious attention, while from the words we have read we notice—first, the important duty which the Saviour indicates; and secondly, the affecting argument which the Saviour employs.

I. In the first place, observe the important duty which the Saviour indicates.

He speaks of the door, or the entrance gate of a house, which is implied to be for a season open, and through which all men are to pass, that in that house they may dwell—as in the preceding verse He advises: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." And you must now observe, the object to which the duty relates, and the spirit in which the duty is to be performed.

1. With regard to the object to which the duty relates, you must understand that the door or gate signifies the entrance or commencement of a life of true piety, which conducts the soul to an ultimate enjoyment of heaven. The same figure, or that which with a little variation is parallel to it, is on several occasions employed by the Saviour, in the same application; as for instance, in the seventh chapter of the Gospel by the evangelist Matthew, He speaks of "the strait gate" at the entrance of "the narrow way that leadeth unto life"—as again, in the tenth chapter of the Gospel by John, He speaks of "the door of the sheepfold," "into which," He says, "if any man enter, he shall be saved"—and as again, in the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew, He speaks of the attendants of the Bridegroom passing on towards the marriage feast, whilst "the door was shut." When true piety is presented under the metaphor of a "way," a "sheepfold," or (as in the text,) a "door," to be entered by certain means, it is presented under a form of representation, which beautifully illustrates its nature and its office. Without, however, dwelling on this consideration, you will perceive that it is the duty of man to enter in at the door—that is, to adopt for himself a life of true piety and of genuine religion—religion, which works so great a change upon our passions and our pursuits—religion, which transforms us from infidelity to faith, from sin to holiness, "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,"—religion, which identifies us with all that is precious in the provisions of redeeming love, and which is to be crowned by all that is delightful in the unchanging felicities of eternity.

We will observe further, that while the door is represented as being open, it is represented also as being "strait," or narrow—thus signifying the fact, that there are at the outset, as throughout the continuance of a life of true piety, numerous and serious difficulties. We are accustomed, brethren, to speak frequently of the pleasure of religion, and we know that religion is associated with delights, to the intensity and sublimity of which no possible limits can be assigned; but on the other hand, it must at the same time be

acknowledged, that men can only be partakers in the household of Christ and of God, in connection with much hardship and expence. This fact requires to be fully and fairly stated, in order that there may be, in regard to religion, that careful counting of the cost, apart from which no profession of it can be rightly undertaken or permanently sustained. Hence it was, our Saviour employed the epithet which is presented in our text; and hence also He presented more largely that emphatic statement which you find exhibited in the chapter succeeding the one from which we now address you. You read in the twenty-fifth verse of that chapter, that "there went great multitudes with Him: and He turned, and said unto them, If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." In the same spirit, and for the same reason, we remind you, brethren, of the difficulties which are associated with a career of genuine religion now. We candidly tell you of your difficulties, while at the same time we earnestly protest against your delays. There are, for example, difficulties arising from the indwelling corruption and depravity of your own hearts; there are difficulties arising from the external world, in its multifarious pleasures and blandishments, on the one hand, and in its gathering frowns and impending persecutions, on the other; and there are difficulties arising from the great adversary, who by his wiles would endeavour above all things to preserve his victims in his coils.

Now, brethren, these are the difficulties which make the entrance to the temple and the home of piety "strait." Behold them—measure them—calculate them in all their intensity; and remember, that only as against these you contend, and only as against these you triumph, can you enter into the kingdom of God. Well may each one employ the language of our Christian poet—

"Lord, can a feeble helpless worm,  
Fulfil a task so hard?  
Thy grace must all the work perform,  
And give the free reward."

2. You have thus seen the object to which the duty relates; you must now observe, the spirit in which the duty is to be performed. The duty is that of entering in at the door which is opened; and it is a duty which is paramount and imperative. The enumeration of difficulties which has just been presented, might almost seem calculated to deter men from entering on a life of piety; but we tell you, brethren, that the door of the Master's house must be passed, in order that you may be safe and happy; and we tell you, that whatever of difficulty may lie in your career, is only to make you yet more eager. You are to "*strive* to enter in," resolved that nothing shall prevent you.

It may be proper for us to observe, with regard to the original term, respecting the spirit of the duty, and rendered in our translation by the word "*strive*," that it is properly one intended to denote the contending in the most determined manner against antagonists in games or in battles; and it implies that the difficulties attending the outset of religion are as enemies, against whom we must fight, in the most resolved and determined manner, if we would attain to salvation and eternal life. It would probably, therefore, be more obviously the purport of the Saviour's language, to say—'Make your way, or force your way, through the strait gate;' there being here a beautiful identity with the statement of the Saviour elsewhere, respecting the spirit in which eternal blessings are to be secured: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Now divesting this exhortation of a little of its figurative character, it must be regarded as exhorting men to



make a personal interest in religion their first and immediate concern—as calling upon them, in spite of all opposing obstacles, at once and with unshrinking and unreserved hearts to embrace it—“labouring to enter into rest,” “working out their own salvation with fear and trembling,” never ceasing in their intense and earnest striving until they have attained to “glory, honour, and immortality.” This, my brethren, is worthy of the name of Christ; and this the value of your own souls demands from you. You have in many instances halted, hesitated, and delayed; you have been affrighted or seduced into an ignoble alliance with the world or sin, by which you have been led to put off religion, in fearful and guilty postponement; you have looked upon the Master’s house from a distance, and when you have approached the door as though you would enter, a craven fear has stood like a lion in your path, and, strange to say, you have retreated and you have returned. Brethren, we would arouse you, and we would entreat you, in the spirit which has now been recommended, that you would “strive to enter in.” Be earnest, be resolved. In the spirit of penitence, the spirit of faith, and the spirit of prayer, yield yourselves unto God, and grasp His Son, who died for the chief of sinners, as being your portion, your inheritance, and your all. You remember, perhaps, the champion whom the pilgrim, in the renowned allegory, saw before the stately palace, on the top of which were the inhabitants walking in gold. Make his case your own, while I endeavour to repeat it to you. “The pilgrim saw around the door of the palace a number of men who would enter therein, but who durst not. There sat also at a little distance from it a man at a table, ready to take down the names of those who would enter. He saw also in the doorway many men in armour ready to keep it, and to do those who would enter all the hurt and mischief they could. At last, when they all started back from fear of the armed men, there came one man of very stout countenance, who went to him that sat at the table, and said—‘Set down my name, Sir,’—which being done, he put a helmet on his head, and drew his sword, and rushed at the armed men in the doorway, who laid on him with deadly force, whilst the other, nothing discomfited, used his weapon most fiercely. At last, when he had given and received many wounds, he forced his way through the door and pressed onwards into the palace, in which were very pleasant voices heard from those within, even from those who walked upon the top in gold, saying—

‘Come in, come in;  
Eternal glory shalt thou win.’

So he went in, and was clad with garments such as they were.” My hearers, you are at the door. Oh! hesitate not, parley not, but enter. Hear the voices of the redeemed inviting you—“Come in, come in;” and hear above all the voice of the Divine Master, uttering the spirit-stirring promise, enough to enliven the coldest and to render undaunted the most timid—“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne.”

Here, brethren, is the duty which the Saviour indicates. It is the adoption of a life of genuine piety, which is to be embraced and pursued with eagerness and determination, in spite of all difficulties and obstacles whatever.

II. And now, secondly, we are to notice the affecting argument which the Saviour employs.

He speaks, you observe, of the master of the house rising up from the seat which he is supposed to have occupied for a time, at the entrance of the dwelling, hospitably and kindly inviting the passers-by to enter and be happy, and shutting to the door, preventing any one who came afterwards from finding a dwelling in his mansion. This is the grand circumstance by which

the observation before us is enforced ; and it is, you observe, pursued in its illustration in terms of overwhelming solemnity, throughout the subsequent parts of the paragraph. We shall not now detain you by enumerating the various mistaken interpretations which have been rendered, of the meaning of the Saviour ; we propose to direct your attention to what we consider the true meaning, which you will find in a series of particulars, constituting a mighty, as it ought to be an irresistible plea, for the embracing of religion without any further delay.

Let me, then, entreat you to devote your patient and devout regard to the four following heads, which will be found to accumulate into the argument which the Saviour advances.

1. In the first place, the Saviour states that the present life is the only season for securing personal religion. The season during which the door continues open, is the period of human life. And my brethren, notwithstanding the various difficulties which have been enumerated, there are many and delightful facilities afforded for the cultivation of the tastes and habits we have now urged ; and in the Gospel, established by the authority of the Son of man, these facilities are presented in the most abundant and delightful manner. We have "line upon line and precept upon precept ; here a little and there a little ;" "our eyes see our teachers, and our ears hear a voice behind us, saying, This is the way." "The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places ; yea, we have a goodly heritage." But while, brethren, we do justice to the abundance and value of our privileges, we must at the same time remember the brevity and the uncertainty of their duration. They are held by a tenure, which is scarcely worthy the name. With regard to the faculties of the mind, is it infrequent or uncommon, that where a nice adjustment of the mental powers was once discernible, there reason totters and is driven from her throne ; and there, instead of the beautiful harmony which was once apparent, we find in the temple of the spirit only the wayward flickerings and uncertain shadows of the imagination, playing like the lightning amidst the ruins which itself has made ? We who are surrounded by the elements of uncertainty, are we not continually walking upon the verge of unseen realities ? and when contemplating the apparent security, and reasoning upon the comparative certainty of life, is there not a voice which says—"This night shall thy soul be required of thee ?" How many and how solemn have been the forebodings to this effect, which the operations of Divine Providence have presented, during the months which have now elapsed ! And if, my brethren, there be this uncertainty with regard to the continuance of our privileges, and the continuance of the faculties, and the life, during which alone these privileges can be enjoyed, does not this constitute a mighty argument against delay ? "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain : whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life ? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." "Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work nor device in the grave whither thou goest." And, my hearers, young and old, whatever your rank or position, remember that to do it with your might, you must do it *now*.

2. Again, secondly, the Saviour states, that those who die without personal religion, are excluded from the enjoyment of happiness in His presence. In the absence of that preparation to which we have adverted, there is an exclusion from the house of the Master ; they cannot enter to Him, and receive what He has prepared as the fruition of the renovated and the redeemed. This fact of exclusion the Saviour upon various occasions implies, in figures similar to that which is now before us : as in the parable of the marriage

supper He tells us of the man that came thither "who had not on the wedding garment," and who was cast out from the banquet; and as again, in the parable of the ten virgins, He tells us of those foolish ones who came too late, when the door was shut; and upon other occasions we find, without parabolic imagery, the one and the same truth presented.

My brethren, the presence of Christ, the great Master, in heaven, is the seal of happiness; and it is not a little remarkable, that the mere fact of the Saviour's presence in heaven is often pointed out in the sacred Record, as comprehending within it all that heaven contains of felicity and of glory. You remember such expressions as the following: "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also shall My servant be. If any man serve Me, him will My Father honour." Again: "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Again: "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." Again, in the anticipations of the apostle—"willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord;" "having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better;" "so shall we be ever with the Lord." And thus it is that we have the high acknowledgment of inspiration—"In Thy presence is fulness of joy, and at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." And those who depart without evangelical religion, are excluded from whatever of happiness is presented in connection with the visible glory and presence of the Saviour.

Well now, my brethren, take this mere fact of exclusion; compare it in its nature with the difficulties and obstacles attending the embracing of true religion and persevering in it to the end. Do you bring forth the balances of the sanctuary, and weigh the two in the opposite scales. What is the difficulty, compared with the fruition? What is the pain, compared with the enjoyment? What is the "affliction, which is but for a moment," compared with the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?" Does not right reason at once convince you of the utter folly of hesitation, when the result is so mighty and so majestic? My brethren, by all that heaven contains of enjoyment—that enjoyment which when possessed will continue throughout interminable ages of eternity—I would conjure you at once to resolve that you will seek their possession—for remember, that "when once the Master of the house is risen, and has shut to the door," they will be unapproachable and unattainable *for ever*.

3. We advance a step further. The Saviour states, that those who die without personal religion may make many vigorous efforts and employ many vehement entreaties to obtain salvation, which will be utterly and absolutely unavailing. "When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets. But He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." We do not, my brethren, pretend to affirm that any such conversation as this actually transpires, in connection with the state of those who enter into eternity without the preparation we have defined; but we do mean to affirm, that this representation of the great Teacher exhibits to us the state of mind of such persons—their yearning and agonised convulsion after mercy and happiness, and also the arrangement of judicial equity, by which their agonised and convulsive yearning is rendered useless, their doom being irrevocably fixed. And truly

brethren, there are few representations more graphic of what is the state and what are the desires of those who find, when too late, the portals of the mansions of happiness closed against them, while behind and around and above them are gathering the tremendous elements of the last tempest; when there is the consciousness that they have no refuge and no shelter against the storm, but are houseless and homeless. And I might perhaps imagine the case of some one now in the presence of God, who having resisted countless mercies and opportunities, shall at last (which may God in infinite mercy prevent) die without personal religion, and be found standing before the closed door knocking and knocking again for admittance. And what may be the plea? 'Lord, open to me: I was the child of pious and devoted parents; my earliest accents were taught to lisp Thy name in praise and prayer; I was nurtured amid scenes of piety and devotion; I sat under a faithful minister; I was the subject of strong impressions—conscience, providence, retribution, all pleading; I engaged in Thy cause; I numbered myself with Thy people; I was found at Thy table, and if I have wanted one thing, I have had many things besides.' Shall they avail? A strange and an insane plea indeed—to present the memory only of abused advantages, in the presence of One who hath Himself pronounced, that "to whom men have committed much, of them they will ask the more." And the reply will be—"I know you not whence ye are." And when the urgency becomes yet more eager, the Judge most sternly answers—"I know you not; depart from Me." And it is *too late!* Angelic spirits sing—"It is too late!" Redeemed souls, (and perhaps the parent's voice is heard mingling with them,) repeat—"It is too late!" Fiends, advancing to grasp their victim, in fell triumph shout—"It is too late!" And the soul, sinking down into the darkness of the abyss, is heard reverberating in torment—"It is too late!" Blessed be God, it is *not* "too late" now.

4. Once more, the Saviour states, that those who die without personal religion are consigned to an habitation of positive, supreme, and enduring misery. "There shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." And if, my brethren, we might be permitted to dwell for a few moments upon the nature of the misery which shall be the lot of all those who die without personal religion, we would observe, that it will consist in such elements as these.

In the first place, it will consist in remorse and self-reproach, on account of the loss of heaven. The Saviour says: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." As though the lost were placed in some position where they can see souls entering into glory, while they themselves are abandoned to eternal misery and wretchedness, in the consciousness of their hopeless exclusion,—beholding heaven, and feeling hell. And what remorse will there be in the knowledge, that that exclusion and that privation has been caused by themselves! My brethren, it is so. They who are lost dare not plead that any decree or purpose of God has been the cause of their perdition; they dare not urge any want of capacity or of power; they know well that that perdition has been gained by themselves. They have been self-murderers! They have committed the worst of all suicides—a suicide upon their souls. And what agony will be experienced, in the consciousness of this!

Again: it will consist in the entire abandonment of the soul to corruption and iniquity: "Depart from Me, all ye that work iniquity." And this will itself be a source of agony and of woe. Each unholy passion striking into the soul with more than scorpion sting!

Again: it will consist also in the companionship of other lost beings:—fallen fiends of darkness; the spirits of the human family who themselves have only perdition for their portion; "idolaters, whoremongers, adulterers, and who-

soever loveth and maketh a lie;" all hateful and unholy—all "tormented and tormenting one another."

And then again; it will consist also in the consciousness that this torment is unchanging and for ever. Brethren, in spite of modern speculation and infidelity in this respect, it is distinctly affirmed by our Lord himself, that the agony of the lost is as enduring as the happiness of the saved: "These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." "The worm that dieth not" is *for ever*! "The fire that is not quenched" is *for ever*! "The blackness of darkness" is *for ever*! "The smoke of torment" is *for ever*! And it is a fearful truth, that the immortality of torment is just; and those who suffer know that He is righteous who hath judged thus! Oh! ponder upon the end! Oh! think whether any of you that are listening to the truth to-night can wilfully pass on to an eternity of woe, which you might avoid; a state into which, if you enter, you may look around and ask—"What! this darkness for ever? this anguish for ever? this loss for ever?"—and a thousand echoes, like a thousand demons starting from their cells, shall reverberate—"For ever!"

Thus it is, "when once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door."

And now, my brethren, the argument of the Saviour is before you; and let me ask you, with impassioned earnestness, that you will view it as it stands. He has informed you of your obligations to devote yourselves to His service, in the Gospel which He has given you for a rule of faith and obedience; and as a reason why religion is to be regarded as your portion, He tells you that the present life is the only season for securing it—the duration of that season being brief and precarious; He tells you that those who die without personal religion are excluded from the enjoyment of happiness in His presence; He tells you that they make determined efforts and employ vehement entreaties to obtain salvation, which are absolutely unavailing; and He tells you that they are consigned to the endurance of supreme and eternal misery. Do any of you find a flaw in the case? Do any of you discover a defect in the argument? Is it not decisive? Is it not conclusive? If you admit the authority of the Bible, it is complete. And what remains, then, but a right provision, as the Gospel has demanded, for the time "when once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door."

I might, my brethren, congratulate sincerely those, constituting perhaps a large proportion of this auditory, who have already by Divine grace devoted themselves to Christ, and received the blessings of the house of mercy. You have been turned "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;" your "iniquities are forgiven"—your "sins are covered;" you have sat down with the Saviour to the banquet of His love; you have tasted of the viands He has prepared, and have found them the first fruits and the pledges of immortality; and you are waiting for a little season, till the owner of the palace shall open wide the folding doors of the inner and more glorious sanctuary, and conduct you to the vast congregation of the blessed, who are engaged in His praises and in the possession of unspeakable happiness there. Brethren, how high are you privileged; and with what eagerness and anxiety ought you to address yourselves to those who are yet without desiring for themselves that your reconciliation may be theirs, that your adoption into the Divine family may be theirs, that your protection may be theirs, that your triumph over death and Satan may be theirs, that your immortality and glory in heaven may be theirs! You will not, my Christian friends, grudge a service which has been designed especially for the advantage of those who are as yet strangers to the Master's house. Does the pious parent

grudge it in behalf of his child? or the pious husband in behalf of his partner? or the pious child in behalf of his parent? Is there one who does not in spirit ask the preacher to plead with them still, and to endeavour, in the strength of his Master, not to let one depart from the house of prayer to-night, without having resolved to enter upon a life of genuine religion, and henceforth to "know nothing among men, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified?" And if this should be the result, it will have been the accomplishment of one of the highest and grandest objects of missionary enterprise ever presented to mankind.

My fellow-sinners, then, one word in conclusion, still with you. Your opportunities neglected have been many; your hearts, in not a few instances, have been indurated by the deceitfulness of sin, and the process of hardening is going onwards with increased acceleration now. Health is flying—death is advancing—eternity, with its high and awful vastness, is close at hand. The future, which once appeared wide open, has its entrance narrow; it is gradually closing, and soon the door will be shut. "*Now* is the accepted time; *this* is the day of salvation." "*To-day* if you will hear His voice harden not your hearts." "*To-day*; lest any of you should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." "*To-day*; lest He swear in His wrath, that ye shall not enter into His rest." We have no commission for to-morrow; the language of the Gospel all belongs to *to-day*. The universe asks you to come and enter; all intelligent nature around you appears vocal in the summons, that you will come; God the Father, God the Spirit, God the Son, the triune and eternal Jehovah, invite you to come; the holy angels, that have kept their first estate, and are ministers to the heirs of salvation, invite you to come; "the spirits of just men made perfect" invite you to come; the church on earth, yet enduring its trials and yet rejoicing in the privileges of the present and the prospects for the future, invite you to come; and it seems as if there were a deep, hollow, muffled sound, rising up from the abode where beings are lost in torment, urging and entreating you to come. Who is it that will venture to refuse? "Who will dwell with the devouring fire? who will dwell with the everlasting burnings?" My fellow-sinners, answer that question to your consciences in retirement, as you shall answer it when you stand before an avenging and a judging God. But remember our last warning, that *now* you prepare, in the spirit of repentance and of faith, for that time "when the Master of the house shall rise up and shut to the door."

May none among you be excluded then!

NOTES OF LECTURES  
ON  
PROPERTY AND PAUPERISM.  
DELIVERED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
BY THE  
REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.

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LECTURE VI.

It would be an evil, if one wrong piece of legislation should be attempted to be neutralised by another, instead of being done away with. Thus it is sometimes gravely proposed, that cottages should not be built, or that children should not be supported by the parish, if the parents be under a certain age. Attempts are made to regulate Pauperism; but it should not be *regulated*, but *destroyed*. It is only an attempt to bring about a compensation of errors, which had better be swept away altogether. The tree that, if left to itself, would have grown upright, may, by a pressure on one side, have been forced to rise obliquely; and this may be counteracted by a pressure on the opposite side; but it would be better that there should be no pressure at all. Leave it to Nature, who balances aright between the proneness to marriage, and the prudence that delays it; and no doubt, if it were so left, the average date would be postponed. A legal provision speeds on and multiplies marriages; and without it they would not be so numerous or so early. Still there would be the occasional outbreaks of folly; but the average date of marriage would be delayed. The alteration would not *extinguish* profligacy; but it would *check* it. There would be some fewer workmen; and this would be enough to cause much higher wages.

We are not so unwise as to advocate the instant abolition of the present system. A few trial parishes would set the matter at rest. The present "roundsmen" should be treated as old cases; and only new applicants made to wait, till regular openings should be presented. If each labourer were left to the consequences of his own imprudence, the amount of imprudence would be diminished; and if only a few marriages were suspended, and a few criminalities refrained from, the market for labour would be less loaded, and wages would be raised. There are many modes of smoothing the way to such a change in country parishes. Sometimes a gentleman has taken into his service all the supernumeraries for months. All the pay might be turned into wages. New cases, coming on gradually, might be provided for in the same way. But, the *right* to relief being abolished, imprudences would be felt by families as a misfortune; a higher tone of virtue would spring up; and labourers would soon attain greater comfort, because their number would be less.

It is important to distinguish between a virtue of *principle* and a virtue of *necessity*; the former being gradual and the latter immediate in its application. The provision for illegitimate children seems to amount to a tenth part of all the Poor's Rates. In Marylebone parish, London, it exceeds £3,000 a-year. There are instances of women living in competence upon parish allowances for their illegitimate children. This leads the family to which such a woman belongs to wink at prostitution.

Emigration has been likened to a safety-valve; but the operation of a safety-

valve implies pressure from within, and the *creative* process will always balance the *relieving* one; for the distress of labourers must be great indeed, ere it overcomes their love of home, and leads them to renounce it for ever. Beside, the Poor Laws counteract Emigration; but if they were abolished, it would be a good way for clearing the country of surplus labourers; as we could send away any who might complain of want of employment. In most cases, the offer to provide for them by emigration, would not be accepted: hence the plan would not be expensive to government.

When I resided in Glasgow, there was an Emigration Society there, consisting of three or four hundred members. A deputation came to request my influence with government, in order to facilitate their views. I told them to look out those of their number who belonged to my parish. For these, amounting to nine, I preached a sermon and made a collection; but, when the matter came to look so serious, one and all refused to go.\*

If the stimulus to population be kept up, the country will always be like a vessel running over: it would be much better to keep the population below the margin. This object might be much promoted, if the people were brought into a habit of saving, by a parish Savings-Bank; but this is now prevented by the law of Pauperism. There is not one moral interest which this law does not oppose! We know of one person who was refused relief, because he was able to send his children to school. The days have been, in Scotland, when it was customary, during a virtuous attachment of years, for the parties to fill up the interval with those frugalities and labours, by which they made provision for their future household. I remember something of this, which they called "providing." I regret the direction it took—that of amassing a prodigious quantity of linen; but still the principal thing was gained—a few years' delay. I like to see a comfortable farm-house, provided with a clock and a small library; but the Poor Laws prevent all this. Without the co-operation of their own virtuous endeavours, there is no possible way of doing good to the lower classes, and of elevating them to a higher place than that which they now occupy; but there is a patent way by which they may themselves attain that object; since they have an absolute command of the supply of labour. Such a nation as we wish to see, cannot be born in a day†; but in a day we might begin the approximation to it. Every new school,‡—every deposit in a Savings-Bank, is an

\* A whole Chapter (the Thirteenth) on the subject of Emigration, which is but slightly adverted to here, will be found in the First Volume of Dr. Chalmers's "Political Economy in connexion with the Moral State and Moral Prospects of Society" (forming Volume 19 of his works) Page 380.

† "Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once?" (Isaiah lvi. 8.)

‡ Dr. Chalmers has treated, at large, on "Sabbath Schools," in the First Volume of his "Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns," Chapter 8, Page 305. See Volume 14 of his Works (Christian and Economic Polity of a Nation," Volume 1), Page 304. For his opinion on "Mechanic Schools," see the Third Volume of his "Christian and Civic Economy," Chapter 24, Page 378; or his "Christian and Economic Polity," Volume 3 (forming Volume 16 of his Works), Page 104. He had previously devoted to this subject a separate pamphlet, entitled—"Considerations on the System of Parochial Schools in Scotland; and on the advantage of establishing them in Large Towns." This pamphlet was incorporated in his "Speeches and Tracts;" and was republished in Volume 12 of his Works ("Tracts and Essays on Religious and Economical Subjects"), Page 191. This little publication led to the "erection and partial endowment of four schools and school-houses; and a good education is now given to upwards of six hundred children." Popular Education was one of the last subjects which occupied both the pen and the personal exertions of the venerable Lecturer. See his "Churches and Schools for the Working Classes." It was an "Address on the practicability of providing Moral and Religious Education for the Working Population of Large Towns; as illustrated by the success which has attended the operations carried on in the West Port of Edinburgh. Delivered December 27, 1845."



approximation towards it. Pauperism is a grievous obstruction in its way; and, if not removed, will seal the population in irrecoverable degradation!

There is one effect of capital in the hands of the lower classes that is quite obvious. It is a barrier between them and that urgent necessity, which gives such an advantage to masters, in the question of wages. A man on the point of starving will take any remuneration that may be offered. This overloads the market with commodities; and by the very poverty of the people their misery is perpetuated. But if they were to refrain from working, the excess of commodities would be cleared off; and, there being no production, wages would rise. Capital is like a fly-wheel in machinery,—preventing jolts. A brisker demand would bring a better remuneration. The whole platform of humble life would take a higher level; and every man who felt aright would triumph in the spectacle of a hale and well-conditioned peasantry!

“There cannot be conceived a more cruel dilemma for the poor operative, than that, in eking out a subsistence for his family, he should thus overwork himself; and, by that miserable effort, should only strengthen the barrier that lies in the way of his final deliverance;—that, for the relief of the present urgencies of Nature, he should be compelled to put forth more than the strength of Nature; and yet find, as the direct result of his exertion, a lengthening out of the period of his distress;—that the necessity should thus be laid upon him of what may be called a self-destroying process;—accumulating, as he does, with his own hand, the materials of his own wretchedness; and so annoying and overwhelming the Earth with the multitude of his commodities, that she looks upon his offerings as an offence, rather than an obligation, and refuses to sustain him.”\*

We dislike the interference of a clergyman with the secular concerns of a parish; but we should like him to establish a Savings-Bank, though not to interfere with its management, except by his countenance and recommendation. By going among his parishioners he would raise their character and comfort; but, if implicated in the management of compulsory Pauperism, the minister becomes completely secularised. In Glasgow, I spent four years under the old system, and then four years under the new; and during the latter I was able to give my whole time to spiritual affairs.† A clergyman near Edinburgh told me, that attention to the poor absorbed two-thirds of his time.

\* From the “Edinburgh Review” for May, 1820 (No. 66), Volume 33, Page 388; or Dr. Chalmers’s Works, Volume 20 (“Political Economy,” Volume 2), Page 381.

† See Dr. Chalmers’s “Statement in regard to the Pauperism of Glasgow, from the experience of the last Eight Years.” This pamphlet, originally published in 1823, is now included in Volume 16 of the Author’s Works (“Christian and Economic Polity,” Volume 3), Page 215.

## MESSIAH, THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

HON. AND REV. BAPTIST W. NOEL, M.A.

PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, BEDFORD ROW,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 11, 1847.

*"His name shall be called The Prince of Peace."*—Isaiah ix. 6.

THE meaning of this expression is made plain and certain by the words which immediately follow: "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." He shall be a prince; He shall establish peace on the earth. "His name shall be called The Prince of peace."

But when we receive this prediction of our Lord, and reflect upon it, we are met with some contradictions to it, which are both apparent and most effectual. Our Lord, when He was upon earth, declared on the contrary—"I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword." Accordingly, He further told His disciples that they must expect to be "hated of all men," and to be "hated of all nations." He warned them, that the feuds that should arise through His doctrine, would poison the peace of families; "the brother should deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child." He warned them, that there should be public persecution as well as private, and that they should be dragged before governors and kings for His sake, and scourged in public. We were further informed by His inspired apostle, that this persecution would not be confined to those, that were avowedly the enemies of Christ. He forewarned His disciples before the canon of Scripture was closed, that there would be a community, of which we read in the seventeenth chapter of the Apocalypse, that should be "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." This woman was some "great city," answering to Babylon, the great enemy of God's people in older times. It was a community which was reigning over the kings of the earth. It was a community that was not Pagan, for then it would have been described as a savage beast, like the persecuting heathen emperors which Daniel saw in vision, but this was a harlot community, that professed to belong to Christ, but was faithless to Christ; and therefore some fallen church of Christ would reign, a great city, over the kings of the earth: which could be none but Rome, that came in process of time so far to forget all allegiance to Christ, as to become "drunken with the blood of the saints, and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." Universal war, then, rather than peace, seemed to be predicted as the result of the doctrine of Christ.

And have not facts, up to this day, answered to these predictions? Ten Imperial persecutions, extended over the most civilised parts of the world, threatened through three centuries the extermination of the church of Christ: in which every atrocity was committed, and the barbarous ingenuity of man taxed to the utmost extent to devise new torments to make the servants of Jesus Christ suffer. And when heathenism was subdued by the power of the Gospel, and ceased to reign, it was only that this other prediction might be

accomplished fearfully in the earth; so that the saints of Jesus Christ became His martyrs throughout Europe. Papal Rome succeeded to the enmity of Pagan Rome: in the vallies of Piedmont, and along the plains of France, and throughout the Low Countries, and in England also, as well as, in the time of the Reformation, throughout Italy and Spain, everywhere accomplishing what Christ by His apostle had predicted, and bringing myriads and hundreds of thousands of the saints of Jesus to public martyrdom; massacring without mercy the feeblest and the strongest, young and old, and threatening the extermination of the church of Christ. And this led to still more extensive offerings to the sanguinary dispositions of man; great and long protracted wars following these massacres. Witness the wars of the Hussites in Bohemia, the wars of the Huguenots in France, to mention no other civil commotions, to which the doctrine of Christ has seemed to lead. And then, when the sword was sheathed, and nation was not imbruing its hands in the blood of other nations for the sake of theology, even then the different churches of Christ raged in enmity one towards the other: factions that have not ceased to this day, so that the governments of the world find questions of theology and ecclesiastical rivalry still mingling with the counsels of senates, and embarrassing all their decisions. Is this the peace which Christ came to produce? In what sense is He "the Prince of peace?"

These evils that have arisen from the doctrine of Christ, and which perhaps have made that doctrine occasion more bloodshed than any single cause that has afflicted mankind, do not in the least degree detract from the glory of this great Monarch, this adorable Saviour, who after all establishes beyond all question at once, to the minds of all who believe on Him, His claim to be "the Prince of peace" throughout the universe. If the servants of Jesus Christ were sent forth by Him as sheep among wolves, and the wolves have torn the sheep in every land, it is not the fault of the sheep that these raging persecutions have taken place. If He has sent forth His disciples to love one another, and to love all mankind, it is not the fault of Him, nor His doctrine, nor His people, if apostates from His faith have chosen to carry His abused name upon their foreheads, and under that name to persecute with a violence which would have stamped infamy even upon heathenism, those who loved Him and served Him the best in the earth. And if those who have even followed Him with honesty of purpose, have yet been so ill instructed in His declared will, or have sinfully given way to the weakness of their tempers, so that those have quarrelled for ages, who by His express authority ought to have been one in Him, it is not to be ascribed to His doctrine, but to their faults. And all this evil, great as it unquestionably is, and though it has fed the mirth of the infidel age after age, is transitory still, preparatory still; and still does the strong and stedfast faith of His people carry forward their thoughts to that day, when transient evil will only end in lasting good, and when, after all impediments have been swept away, He will still reign everywhere and always as "the Prince of peace."

Think only how He has laid the foundations of the peace, of which it is here said He should be the Author; for this name "Prince of peace" evidently implies that He should be the Prince causing peace, through whose government there should be universal peace. Each of the great offices that He has come to fulfil, secures this universal peace. As the Prophet of His church, the Counsellor of the human race, His doctrine has everywhere guided men into the way of peace with God, and imposed upon them the obligation of living in peace with one another. As the great High Priest of His church, His atoning sacrifice has secured peace with our offended God. And then, as the King of His church, who reigns by His Spirit and by His providence over all things for ever, does He communicate the peace which He has procured, and which He has commanded them to attain, graciously ordering all events towards the

ultimate and complete establishment of peace in the world. As Prophet, Priest, and King, as King because also Prophet and Priest, He can be—He is—the ever-living “Prince of peace.”

Now let us this evening glance at the peace, which Christ is producing, and will produce in the earth. Every one of His disciples here must in the review, however cursory, feel his heart thankfully lifted up to God for this great blessing, and must rejoice in our Lord and King, because He is universally “the Prince of peace.”

Our first great need is to have peace with God. Because we are at enmity with God, God is angry with us, and we are “by nature the children of wrath” even as the rest of mankind; and if we had been left in our lamentable condition, we should have been only alienated from God with increasing intensity for ever, while we expected throughout eternity nothing but “the wrath to come.” But Christ “is our peace.” God has been “in Christ reconciling the world to Himself;” so that He is angry with penitent believers no more. Christ has rendered the Divine Being just in justifying him that believeth; and “being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” So that those who come to God through Christ, may feel assured “by the nature of the work which Christ has accomplished, by the attributes of God which they know, and by His own certain promises, that His wrath is removed, that He has accepted them as His adopted children, and will love them for ever. And therefore Christians may have peace. The wrath is removed, and the alienation gone, and we may now have peace—perfect peace—resting simply on the work of Christ and the promise of God. Nothing is wanting but faith, nothing but just to believe the work of Christ and the promise of God; so that if any Christian in this congregation has not a deep, settled, and in this view at least a perfect peace, it is to be ascribed exclusively to unbelief. There is nothing else to cause it. The work of Christ is complete; the promise of God is certain; every hell-doomed sinner is welcome to eternal life, the favour and blessing of God, for nothing in himself, if he only believe the work of Christ, the promise of God, and come to Him through Christ for the mercy He promises; and nothing but unbelief may hinder the most complete and lasting peace to take possession of our souls. He is therefore in this sense “the Prince of peace.”

And that peace with God directly leads to universal peace diffused through the souls of His people. So that they are filled with “joy and peace in believing, through the power of the Holy Ghost;” so that the kingdom of God within them “is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” Why should a Christian, thus pardoned and at peace with God, not have universal peace? He can look to the providence of God as ordering all events for his welfare; everything must work together for his good; why should he not be at peace? His passions are subdued; he has no more envy and jealousy, but he is content and humble; intemperate, riotous passions are exchanged for temperance and purity; he has no unjust aims to secure, no wicked objects to pursue; why should he not be at peace? He has been forgiven by God; why should he not forgive all the world? And when these truths are brought to the Christian’s soul by the Holy Spirit, and he reflects upon these truths as recorded in God’s Word in seriousness of mind, the mind being solemnized and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, then this universal peace takes possession of his soul; and being at peace with God, he is at peace with himself, and he is at peace with all the world. He has nothing to change, nothing to alter in the Divine law—in the Divine appointments; pleased with his duty, satisfied with his prospects, thankful for the society to which he is introduced, looking forward with joy to a blessed inheritance; and therefore he is at peace.

And as thus peace becomes the possession of each individual believer, who

lays hold of the promises of God made to him in Christ, so does this blessed Redeemer, "the Prince of peace," give peace to every Christian family. It is true, that there is war at first; the father delivered up the son to death, and the son the father; but that war is momentary; for each Christian, at the same time that he is brought to peace, is brought to gentleness and firmness, and there are no two things more calculated to restore peace in a family. Each Christian, when he receives Christ, becomes a far more amiable member of the circle in which he lives. He can now be disinterested, who was before selfish; he can now give up his will, who was before self-willed; he can now patiently bear with little slights, who was before impatient under them. He who before perhaps was unjust in his conduct to those with whom he was associated, and still more frequently inconsiderate to their feelings, has exchanged both those faults for the opposite virtues; and being meek, humble, gentle, and affectionate, therefore, he at least is not at war with his household. And if a Christian is placed among those who abhor the Gospel most, those who have the least moderation in their enmity, still you have often seen, and will often see yet, that those who are consistent disciples of Christ, by these two qualities, (to mention no others,) their firmness and their gentleness—both of which grace imparts—do very frequently secure peace even to the unconverted members of their families. For what is the use of contention with him, who is like a rock? and how can those who are fierce in their thoughts, find it in their heart to quarrel with these, who have the gentleness of a lamb? When these two dispositions are united, so that the Christian cannot be moved from duty, and yet in this has neither self-will nor passion, then does it often happen, that when this is perceived even by the irreligious members of the family in which a Christian may live, they at last learn to esteem and respect those, whose religion they may not love.

But when the grace of God reaches not one member of a household, or two, but reaches heart after heart, and when the whole family become fellow-travellers towards an eternal home, then the peace of that family becomes deep and blessed indeed. When each member of it has those Christian dispositions, which both are calculated to win affection and to deserve esteem; when all are loving, and therefore all are loved; when they have the same great truths to rest upon, the same prospect to cheer them, the same Lord to serve, and for the most part the same tasks likewise to occupy their attention; united thus in those bonds which natural friendship never could equal, and all natural affection being enhanced, elevated, and confirmed by the brotherly love which the Gospel alone can produce, a Christian family becomes a circle of such peace as the world does not elsewhere manifest.

The Christian congregation is but the larger family; and if you look at the language of the New Testament, or if you consider the character of the Gospel, you must see that the Christian church must, no less than the Christian family, become the abode of deep and settled peace. And though there is some abatement to be made, from the infirmities of Christ's own followers, and there may be for the moment, or partially, such dissensions as the unavoidable infirmities of human nature will still produce, yet if you remember the example of the church at Jerusalem, on which the Holy Spirit was poured out, and which was made the very type and pattern of each church in after days, you must see at once, that where much grace and much light are bestowed upon a people by the Giver of all good, that people *must* be united in brotherly love; so that the apostle could say to another church, besides that at Jerusalem—"As touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." It was not the regulation only that he had given, which obliged them to be mutually benevolent; but the grace that had been imparted, compelled them to be so, and the members of that church at Thessalonica loved one another for the sake of Christ, as the

members of each Christian church, who are under the teaching of God and are walking in His ways, must similarly love one another.

But although the ties that bind each Christian member of a church to all other members of it, must naturally have an earlier influence than the obligations resting on each Christian to love strangers for Christ's sake ; yet the language of the New Testament, and the generous and universal character of the Gospel of Christ, render it certain that the relationship of churches to one another must be of the same kind, as the relationship of the different members of a church to each other. For Christians are never commanded in the sayings, never led by the example and authority of Christ, nor by the nature of the case, to restrict their benevolence to the members of the same congregation. All the brethren have a title to the love of all, as far as they know each other. It is the very character of renewed minds, that they are taught of God to love one another. " We know that we have passed from death unto life," says the apostle, " because we love the brethren ;" and all those who are members of Christ, in whatever church they are found, must be dear to those who know Christ and who are aware that He has an equal love to all His disciples, and is preparing to place them all in the kingdom of His glory. If therefore divisions have taken place in the churches of Christ, and still rage unhappily to this day, there is no foundation for that schism in the Scriptures. It is true, the unavoidable infirmities of our understanding ~~to~~ secure differences of opinion ; it is true, that differences of opinion may lead to corresponding differences of discipline and of worship ; it is true, that various congregations of Christ's followers may therefore have differences both in doctrine and in discipline ; but just as the necessities of the case cause that each Christian congregation shall meet by itself, and yet there is no schism in the body of Christ because various congregations meet under different roofs and in different localities, so if they knew their duty to one another, would it make no difference in this matter, that those who are honestly serving the same Lord, heartily embracing the same great truths, living in obedience to the same great laws, upholding the same Gospel in the world, and looking to the same glorious home, worship in different forms and are called by different names, but they would be as united as those who admit the same form of discipline, but are worshipping in different congregations. It is not the theology of the Gospel, which has occasioned factions in the church of Christ, but the evil tempers of half-instructed and imperfectly sanctified followers of Christ, mingling often with those that are only His followers in name ; and when differences of doctrine become, as unhappily they often do, blended with pecuniary and temporary interests, then these things under the mask of religion give an acerbity to contentions between different professing Christians, which the doctrine of Christ alone never would have occasioned. But at the same time it is apparent, that if contrary to Christ's plain commands, contrary to the remarkable doctrine of the fourteenth chapter of the Romans, for instance, or the twelfth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, Christians have manifested, in the different churches which " hold the head" and are not apostate, such criminal factions one against the other, still the tendency of the Gospel is to make all who love the Lord Jesus Christ love one another, and therefore to make all the different churches which are composed of members of Christ, who love Him and who love one another, increasingly tolerate each other's infirmities, and bear with those differences both in doctrine and discipline, which arise from the infirmity of the understanding. And lastly, when this spirit of benevolence is enthroned as it should be, in the hearts of Christ's disciples, there is a manifest and rapid approach to uniformity in doctrine and in discipline, inasmuch as many of these discrepancies have not arisen solely from the infirmity of the understanding, but have continually in this infirm world been mingled with the temporal interests and passions of men ; and

thus the differences between churches tend to their conclusion, no less than the war in families, and Christ will yet be the Prince of peace, as reigning over one universal household, of which the members are at peace with one another.

Again : each church lives in the midst of a society much larger than the church, many of whom may bear the name of Christians, or may be without that name—it matters but little—a much larger society of those that do not take the yoke of Christ, who do not believe His Gospel, who do not obey His laws or live to honour His name. These, as we have seen, have many times persecuted with intense enmity a society so exclusive, a society that appears to them so proud and domineering, as the disciples of Christ, who arrogate to themselves the exclusive possession of truth, and the favour of God exclusively. But even in this society the doctrine of Jesus Christ tends to secure peace. It tends just as far as the doctrines of the Gospel prevail—further than they prevail to the conversion of sinners, to produce such dispositions in the society where the Gospel of Christ is recognised and circulated, and is loved by many, as greatly tend to the peace of that community. The Gospel of Jesus Christ commands all men to be just, and benevolent, and generous. The Gospel of Christ teaches the rich to be beneficent, and liberal, and charitable to the poor. The Gospel of Christ teaches the poor to be industrious and thrifty, to be careful and provident, to be contented, and to sympathise with rather than envy the superior prosperity of the richer classes. The Gospel of Jesus Christ teaches rulers to avoid all oppression, and seek the greatest good of those who are under their dominion ; and the Gospel of Jesus Christ compels His servants to be lovers of order, loyal to their sovereign, and to wish well to the universal prosperity of their country. And it is quite obvious, that these maxims, as far as they prevail, must tend to the universal peace of any society in which they circulate. So that it appears to me perfectly demonstrable, that all the sources of prosperity and peace, which can be justly reasoned out even by the enemies of Christ, which can be with any sound sense imagined to secure the temporal prosperity, order and peace of States, are found in a much higher degree in the doctrine and laws of Christ, than anywhere else ; and no man who loves his country, or who wishes to see his countrymen happy, from the prince on the throne to the lowest peasant, could take a straighter and more certain road to accomplish that universal peace, than by heartily embracing and diligently promulgating the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And since this is the tendency in each great society, in each nation in which the churches of Christ are scattered here and there, and the children of God are “strangers scattered abroad,” as the apostle calls them, so the manifest progress of the Gospel is to secure a general peace to the disciples of Christ, to the churches of Christ, in the midst of this evil world. They have been hated, maligned, and dishonoured, persecuted and martyred ; it has happened in many lands and through many ages ; and yet the decisive tendency of the history of mankind is to secure the churches of Christ amidst the ungodly population of the earth in perfect peace. God has promised it to His people. He has said to His own church, in the fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah—“Great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established : thou shalt be far from oppression ; for thou shalt not fear : and from terror ; for it shall not come near thee. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by Me : whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper ; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.” Now we see in the course of events the progress of the fulfilment of this promise. The church of Christ has suffered grievous wrong ; persecution has been the lot of the most devoted disciples of Christ many times ; but not only in England and in America—two countries in which the Gospel

has large circulation, and is recognised by myriads—but likewise in Roman Catholic lands, the progress of the light that the Gospel has thrown on the various institutions of society, on the laws of government, has been to secure this peace already to the churches of Christ. In Belgium and in France, for instance, at this moment, under Roman Catholic governments, where there is a Roman Catholic majority, the minority of evangelical Christians are exposed to few other vexations than those which an unbelieving majority must always have in its power to inflict upon the believing minority : but the laws protect them, the laws give them a degree of liberty, such as in the past histories of these countries they never enjoyed ; and that, by the force of those just doctrines thrown upon society, forced upon the understandings of men by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And what we see there, we can likewise see to be the tendency elsewhere too ; leading us to the conclusion, that this prediction of the universal peace of the churches of Christ from all persecutions in the world, may have its accomplishment even before long,

But Christ, our blessed Lord, does evidently by establishing peace in each bosom of His people, peace in each family of His disciples, peace in each congregation of His saints, and peace in all His churches, lead directly to the establishment of international peace throughout the world. Each Christian congregation is made up of Christian families, and is like them ; each Christian nation will be—for there is no Christian nation yet—made up of Christian congregations, and like them ; and just as there is peace in each household of faith, and peace in each church of Christ, in which there is truth and righteousness in harmony, so when the Gospel prevails so that churches of Christ, living and faithful, active and sincere, abound throughout the land, then there are two things that must necessarily prevent that nation being a warlike nation. Its interests, its principles and its tastes are alike irreconcilably opposed to war. Wars of aggrandisement, wars of cupidity, wars even of revenge become intolerable to Christians ; and in proportion as the Gospel of Christ prevails in a land, must the wars that have desolated Europe most of them become intolerable in the retrospect, and much more odious in the imagination that they should again occur. On the other hand, if a Christian nation cannot go to war, a Christian nation can scarcely suffer war. A Christian nation, if such a nation existed, would have elements of strength such as no other nation ever had. Such a nation would be universally industrious, universally therefore healthy in mind and body, toil-strung for every active service. Such a nation must be intelligent beyond its neighbours, united so as no other nation has set us an example of union. Such a nation must love its institutions, which give it happiness ; and love its sovereign by God's appointment. Such a nation must be prosperous, just like the nation under Solomon, when wisdom and righteousness prevailed, and made Israel numerous as the sands of the sea, eating and drinking and making merry. Such a nation must have resources, such as no other nation could have ; and therefore, woe to the nation, that should venture to invade its sacred precincts. It would be able to repel the world. And a nation that would not go to war, and a nation strong enough to repel war, must be the source of peace in the earth. Multiply such nations—as, thank God, they will be multiplied—and then you can see that “nation will not lift up sword against nation, and they will learn war no more.” So that the religion of Jesus Christ, by that very truth which has brought peace to one withered heart, made one wretched sinner happy in Him, can by the universal and almighty efficacy of the same truth and the same Spirit, give peace to all mankind ; and “all nations shall worship Him, all nations shall call Him blessed.”

But our world is a little world, and there are other intelligent creatures, doubtless infinitely more glorious than us ; and these have looked upon the hell-doomed race of man with just indignation. They have seen us, as a race



of apostates, ruining ourselves by dishonouring God; they have seen us grasping at shadows, while we scorned the substance; burying ourselves in what is little and earthly, while we have not even looked up to the heaven God was opening for us. They have seen us exercising the most perverted judgment upon all things around us; calling good evil, and evil good; and embracing misery, while we refused happiness here and hereafter. Look at that angel, God sent to the camp of Sennacherib, breathing in one night death over 185,000 men, as the august minister of God; and see the ministry of angels towards an apostate world. But towards the family of Christ, "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them which shall be heirs of salvation?" And when the hierophantic angel said to John in the island of Patmos, that he was his brother and his fellow-servant, did he not proclaim that he was the brother and the fellow-servant of all the human family of God? And when they mingle their Hallelujahs with the Hosannas of redeemed saints in glory, do they not teach us what the apostle meant when he said—"Ye are come," not only to the church of the first born, but "to an innumerable company of angels"—to be with them one brotherhood for ever in the service and adoration, and in the joy of God? So that the universe is brought to peace by the blood of Christ, and Jesus is "the Prince of peace," not only to the distracted nations of the world, but between the glorious orders of angels, that render Him their firm allegiance in heaven, and these miserable reptile men, that seemed only to be doomed to be crushed under the wrath of God.

And this lasts for ever; Christ is "the Prince of peace" to the universe for ever. Let those factions that disgrace mankind, that enmity which has lasted, and which the miserable infidel predicts will last to the end, making men as savage beasts to one another, and banishing the memory that men sprung from one Father, and were looking up to one God—let that be conquered at last, extirpated from the ransomed world, and, that ransomed world transported to the kingdom of glory and bliss, there will be no more faction then—there will be no more trouble then. The peace to which Christ brings His people, His whole ransomed family, myriads unnumbered, will last throughout that eternity, which He has made so blessed to those that trust in Him.

Now let me commend this thought, my dear brethren, to your deep meditation. Think of it much; and let us all ask ourselves, whether it ought not to direct, nay, I will say, to control, our whole course. Is it not worthy at once to exercise the government over our judgments and our minds? If there be this peace with the offended God; if there be the right, communicated by the blood of Christ to each penitent believer, to look up to the infinite Governor of all, and say, 'Thou art my Father, and I Thine adopted child;' oh! which in this congregation will have the corrupt hardihood, will have the unspeakable folly, of repelling this august relationship? You may have peace, my hearer, through Christ; God would give you peace this night if you had faith in Christ; why repel it? Why court trouble? Why embrace misery? Why fasten it like a chain upon your soul, heavy though it clanks not, to load your burdened spirit wherever you go, and still gather new links, till the unsupportable weight brings you down beneath the grave—why, when God gives you peace? If you do but now come to Him this night through Christ, to save and sanctify you, to pardon you, to enlighten you, to govern you, to preserve you to His heavenly kingdom, He will do it all; and He will give you, in doing it, such a peace, that the largest estates, and the soundest health, and the best friendships, and the utmost popularity, and the consciousness of the greatest wisdom never gave to any one, and never can give to you. Take the peace which the Gospel gives you. Be at peace. Find peace in Jesus Christ at once. Give up every false doctrine, give up levity

and unbelief, give up all the associations that would keep you from it, and embrace the peace which God offers to you by the mediation of His Son.

And then, Christians, take care to cherish, and confirm, and complete this peace, day by day, living by dependence on Divine grace; and remember, Christ has called you to a universal peace towards all around you—peace in your own souls as well as peace with God, peace in life and death, peace amidst all conceivable changes in your lives, a peace which the world cannot give, and cannot take away. Live, my dear Christian hearers, in the enjoyment of this peace. Do not slight it. Do not let any habits that you cherish, prevent you having the cheerfulness as well as the gentleness which the Gospel gives. But be at peace in your own souls, and be at peace with one another.

But next, when we think of those prospects that Christ, Christ only, gives to our fallen world, oh! let us adore and bless that glorious King. Let us think how this peace has been won for us, for our friends, for many in this congregation, for myriads in our nation, for multitudes throughout the world, ay, and for the world itself at last. Christ, that he might make this peace ours, bore a constant war with Himself. The whole world hated Him. Trouble after trouble rolled its heavy wave upon His soul, till He sunk in the conflict, that we might have peace. Nay, He endured that very indignation of God against our sins, which must have ruined us; and it was “the chastisement of our peace,” that was upon Him. God was “pleased to bruise Him,” that we might have peace. Never let us forget to adore a goodness that has no parallel, when the eternal King, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, thus became “the Prince of peace” by suffering the punishment of our transgressions. Never let us forget through what deep waters of trouble, through what unknown anguish of soul Christ has passed to give us the measure of peace we enjoy now, and the prospect of such a perfect peace in the ages to come; and let us adore and bless His name.

But further, if your gratitude is genuine, then be as servants of “the Prince of peace.” “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” They only are the servants of Christ. If you know Him to be your peacemaker, you must be peacemakers like Him, and move through this world, as far as in you lies, to create peace everywhere. By the dereliction of duty?—no. By the abandonment of truth?—never. Maintain truth, fulfil duty, though the whole world be at war in consequence. But be gentle as the lamb, where you are firm as the rock, that the war may not be your creating; and then strive to make all at peace by the example of Christ, by His authority and by His indwelling, constantly manifesting in your own instance the dispositions He would inculcate on mankind.

And lastly, if the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour will assuredly spread this peace throughout the world, then what other prayer should be dearer to us, than this—“Thy kingdom come?” Think not of the heathen world only, when you make that prayer; it is wanted *here*—it is wanted in our congregation, it is wanted in our city, it is wanted in our own hearts. “Thy kingdom come.” That Jesus Christ may reign, the Lord of every thought, every opinion, every faculty, every habit; and that all those blessed results, which come from His dominion, may be seen amidst the millions of mankind, reclaimed by His grace, and blessed by His care. “Thy kingdom come.” Let it be the honest, heartfelt prayer we every day reiterate. And may He answer that prayer, and His Spirit steadily accomplish it; and this sin-ridden world glory in its Redeemer, and give Him glory in return!

## JOY AND PEACE IN BELIEVING.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

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PREACHED IN ST. DUNSTON'S CHURCH, FLEET STREET,  
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*"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing; that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."*—Romans xv. 13.

St. Paul well knew that the only source of prosperity in a church was the manifestation of God's Spirit in the hearts of its members. We learn from his letters to his converts how full was his confidence that God would bless them in answer to his prayers. He was a man of faith; and while, like a "good soldier of Jesus Christ," he marched on with "the sword of the Spirit" in his hand, and the name of Christ on his tongue, to the conquest of sin, he never for a moment forgot that his strength lay in God; he never forgot that with God rested the success of his unwearied efforts in the cause of Christ. He knew that the tree could not grow and bear fruit, unless the dews of the Divine blessing descended, and the beams of the Sun of Righteousness shone forth upon it. Therefore he waited constantly on God for a blessing from on high. He was a praying apostle, as well as a preaching apostle. He could call even God, the all-seeing Heart-searcher, to witness, that "without ceasing" he made mention of his people in his prayers, and frequently animated them by declaring how deeply solicitous he was for their welfare. How often in his letters does his warm heart gush forth with earnest longings for their spiritual good!

And so it is still with Christ-loving ministers. Congregations meet and separate,—some careless—some thoughtful—how few anxious! Yet they are not forgotten. Little are they aware of the many anxious prayers that besiege the throne of grace on their behalf—what wishes ascend from the pastor's heart for a blessing on their souls. Oh! that you would second his efforts, by praying more earnestly and perseveringly for yourselves!

The text is a wish and a prayer of a minister for his people—of the apostle Paul for his Roman converts. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing; that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

May the Spirit of God be present among us at this time, and bless us in our consideration of the blessings which Paul prayed that God would grant to the Roman Christians!

Let me, then, first speak to you concerning these spiritual blessings—"joy and peace."

There are many sources whence mankind seek "peace and joy," for in them is comprised the sum and substance of happiness. There is a fancied "peace and joy" in worldly things, and there is a real "peace and joy" in believing. It is the latter that St. Paul wished his converts to enjoy. He knew if they

had this, their happiness would be in a great measure independent of the changes and chances of this present world. Not so the "peace and joy" which are looked for by worldly people; for these, whether they arise from the comforts of life—health, friends, property—or such like things, are liable to be destroyed at any moment, by any sudden providence. The peace of a worldly man or woman may any hour be destroyed, and all their joys dashed to the ground. The first cross or care may put them to flight; the first afflictive dispensation may lay their possessors prostrate in wretchedness and misery.

Dear friends, the question for you to ask, if you wish to be really happy, is this—'Where can I gain such a peace of mind—such a joy of heart, as will remain not only when all things are well around me, but also when the firmament of my existence is dark with clouds, and the pressing weight of adversity hangs on my steps?' Pure gold, you know, is proved by its bearing the fire. The "joy and peace" you should set your heart on gaining, are they which will not leave you with your friends and earthly goods, but will keep you contented and cheerful amid the saddest troubles and the severest trials. How often is it the case, that a poor child of poverty is happy in circumstances of extreme distress and pain, while some wealthier neighbour who knows not what faith is, shall be fretting under a trifling affliction, though surrounded by comforts!

My brethren in the Lord, where are you laying the foundation of your "peace and joy?" On the shifting quicksands of earthly things? Oh! beware lest you be swallowed up of them, and sink with them to destruction. Or on the Rock of everlasting ages, Jesus Christ? If you believe that you have some measure of "joy and peace," is it such as the hour of death will not utterly banish, nor the trumpet of the judgment convert into sadness and despair?

I. There is "peace in believing." When first the soul is being led by God from the darkness of a sinful state to the light and liberty of the Gospel, there is felt in the heart those convictions of sin which can alone bring the sinner to his Saviour. Conscience, awakened and aroused, speaks sometimes with a louder—at others with a softer voice; but its testimony is the same, namely, of the guilt of sins that have been committed against the pure and holy God. The Holy Spirit warns the sinner of God's holiness and truth, and brings the soul to a sense of its danger. Under the influence of these feelings, there can be no "peace." But then comes in the precious promise of God's Word—"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." Here is the source of true peace, namely, "in believing" and resting on the faithful and unchanging promise of God. There is at first, it may be, but just the sense of sin pardoned, and a load of guilt removed; but the Spirit of God, the messenger of consolation, leads on the newly-born soul to the inner mysteries of sacred things, and opens more and more the eyes of the repentant sinner to the rich promises and blessings of Holy Scripture. Faith takes these promises, and makes them her own. One small ray of peace at first, perchance, flings the soft radiance of its heaven-reflecting beam upon the soul, and with its gladdening influence cheers and consoles the before unhappy sinner. But his peace increases with his growth in grace. He sees more clearly, by God's enlightening grace, what "unsearchable riches" are laid up "in Christ" for believing penitents. Amid much sore conflict with temptation and trial, he anchors his hopes on the broad unshifting basis of His Word who cannot lie; fresh beams of glory come down from the Sun of Righteousness, and dispel by degrees the darkness of the hitherto sin-clouded soul; and thus the sinner, casting from him the fetters which had bound him captive to the devil, but which grace has rent in twain, is enabled to step

forth into the light and liberty of the Gospel of "peace," and to reap the rich harvests of consolation which God hath laid up for His people.

He is at peace in himself. There is a calm serenity diffused through his soul. Although much tried and bound down with a sense of his frailty and his daily sins, he yet knows what Christ meant, when He said—"Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." Conscience no longer preaches a broken law in his ear, for Jesus is his Surety and He has fulfilled it. Does the justified sinner direct his thoughts to God? He has "peace" in his contemplation; and why? Because God is his reconciled Father. Jehovah's countenance no longer seems dark and awful with the frowns of judgment upon the sinner, but is radiant with the smiles of redeeming love towards the adopted and accepted child. The promise is a blessed one: "I have called thee, and I have redeemed thee; I have blotted out as a cloud thy transgressions, and as a thick cloud thy sins; therefore, fear not, for the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

Oh! my dear friends, you cannot tell, unless you are justified sinners, how rich a blessing is this divine and heaven-born one of "peace" and confidence in God. It is a state of mind rather to be felt than described; and the soul that really enjoys it, knows by experience that it is a "peace which passeth all understanding." Oh! that careless and unconverted souls could know how much they are losing by not believing! Is it nothing worth, think you, to look up to God, and feel that He is a reconciled Father?—to Christ, and know that all we need for good He has covenanted to obtain for us, and has sealed the promise with His own blood?—to the Holy Spirit, and be assured that He is preparing us for a bright world of peace beyond the grave, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest?" These are privileges of the believing children of God.

But they are not all. The sacred influence of this peace extends to temporal things, and sheds a cheerful light over all the circumstances of everyday life. Faith rests on God in those things which concern not only the soul, but the body too. Hence the peace resulting from faith is enjoyed amid the storms and tempests, the fluctuations, and trials, and afflictions of life. The believer has confidence in God's goodness, that He is an almighty Friend, able and willing to help, and has promised that "all things shall work together for good to them that love Him." He therefore is satisfied that if he has trials, God has sent them for good, that God's wings of love are spread over him, and His power will sustain. The heart of those who thus trust in God, will give utterance to its feelings in some such language as this—"Do outward circumstances go well with me? It is my Father in heaven pouring down blessings to gladden my heart, and call forth more fervent gratitude from my soul. Am I thrown into adversity? My God is working still to try my faith, and wean me from the world. Are affairs in perplexity, and I know not which way to move—or do storms arise which threaten quite to overwhelm me? Jesus is at the helm of my little bark; He will steer me safely through, and not leave me to perish. Am I deprived of earthly enjoyments, and cast on a bed of affliction? "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." "We have had fathers in the flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; how much rather shall we be subject to the Father of spirits, and live!" It is my Father that holds in His hand all the issues of life and of death. Often when afflictions press most, God's face shines brightest. If God has taken away some things, He has left me many others; and so long as He does not hide away His face in displeasure, but gives me such glorious

and blessed promises, I have that which can more than outweigh all the comforts of this life. I will think on what is left, rather than what is removed. The Psalmist could say—"Thou hast showed me, O God, great and sore troubles;" and yet, in the very same breath—"Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side." Oh! that I had stronger faith; then should I have more of this heavenly peace.

Such is the language of many a tried servant of God, under the conviction of a true and lively faith. Yes, and when contending passions and sore temptations raise a tumult in his soul, and seem to shake to the centre the foundation of his hopes, how often does Christ say, as He did to the ocean waves and winds, "Peace;" and there follows "a great calm." If he looks onward through the dark valley, to the awful and spirit-stirring scenes of the judgment, he has "peace in believing" that God has graciously pardoned his sins, and will justify him before an assembled world. In short, Christ has ordered all things well, and has given to His people a foretaste of that inheritance of perfect peace, which He has prepared in the mansions of His glory for His chosen saints.

Have you, dear friends—have you secured this invaluable gift of the Spirit of God? Take His word for it, it is a rich and heart-strengthening treasure, far more precious to the "believing" heart than all the world can supply. Solomon himself, with all his glory and all his greatness, did not find "peace" therein. Even he, rich and great as he was—surrounded with a luxury and affluence such as the sun hath rarely shone on—bore testimony to the great truth I have advanced. "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." All else is but "vanity and vexation of spirit; vanity of vanities, all is vanity." So said the royal and inspired preacher. Do you believe him? do you really feel that without the "peace of God" indwelling in the heart, the world and the things of the world are nothing worth, when weighed in the scales of eternal truth? I know it is a hard and difficult thing to convince persons of this. It is indeed a toilsome task, a wearying work, while the pleasures and profits of the world are so enticing, and Satan is so busy through them to entrap immortal souls. The Spirit of God alone can do it effectually. But how many are there who have had Solomon's experience, and yet have kept on following the dancing, delusive meteor of "peace" in worldly pleasures and pursuits, even to the last gasp of life—forgetful of the recorded truth, which is written as with a pen of iron on many a blighted heart, and many a sorrowing spirit, as well as in the page of Revelation—"There is no peace to the wicked,"—forgetful of the warning voice, which proclaimed eighteen hundred years ago—"In Me ye shall have peace; in the world ye shall have tribulation." Seek, then, I pray you for "peace in believing." Why remain without it when God and Christ are waiting to impart it to every one of you that will renounce your sins, and throw yourselves in penitence and faith on the Saviour's goodness and His love? There is no "peace" but in Christ—there is no "peace" but "in believing."

II. There is joy in believing. Not that the believer never has times of sadness and sorrow; for various causes will conspire to produce these. But yet if he live near to God, the prevailing habit of his mind should be a cheerful joy. He may be glad, as well as tranquil; yea, he may rejoice with a joy so intense, that even an inspired apostle could not fully describe it, but he calls it "a joy unspeakable, and full of glory." The very same mediatorial work of his Saviour, which procured for the believer the blessing of "peace," laid also the foundation of his "joy." Who but they that have felt it can tell how glad is the convinced sinner, when told those tidings of gladness and salvation, with which the Gospel page is crowded? "Being justified by faith,

we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." There must be justification and pardon, before there can be "peace" or "joy." But when, by God's Spirit, the sinner is led to the cross of his Saviour for salvation, and has felt the renewing power of grace in his heart, his condition is at once changed. The Bible tells him, that if he be converted, he is accepted by God as a beloved child, and is admitted to all the privileges of God's adopted ones. "No more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Jesus Christ."

Here, then, is the believer's cause of joy. Not only are his sins pardoned, but he finds himself regarded, by the God of heaven and earth, with especial affection and love. If you, dearly beloved in Christ—if you are truly His by a vital faith, it is your rightful privilege to come at all times into the very presence-chamber of heaven, and to address Him who sitteth on the throne of the heavens, a King for evermore, as your Almighty Father—a Father who loves His children with an everlasting love, and delights to confer upon them all spiritual blessings, and temporal blessings too, if they are for their good.

But further than this, you may by faith look upon heaven as your future home, and its glory as your inheritance, secured to you by "a covenant ordered in all things and sure." In the pages of Revelation, you find the gates of the "New Jerusalem" thrown open to you; you are bidden to look in upon its streets of gold, and its rivers of gladness—to behold its unutterable splendour, and gaze upon its unclouded glory; but you are taught, that although these are beyond the power of language to tell of, yet the greatest glory of heaven is, that Jesus your Saviour is there, "the author and finisher of your salvation," and that you shall be "with Him, be like Him," and partake of His joy, because you are children of God and "joint-heirs with Christ." Is not here sufficient to awaken joy and gladness in the heart? To feel that so high a dignity as this is conferred upon you, may well set in tune all the faculties of the soul, and call forth Hosannas from every believing heart. What is this glory of an earthly throne, great though it be, compared with the brightness, the glory, and dignity of a seat at the right hand of God? The lowest seat in heaven will more outshine the splendour of earthly kings, than the burning brilliancy of the noonday sun does the faint glimmer of a candle. And shall there be no such thing as "joy" in the hearts of those for whom this heaven is prepared? Surely it is something strange, if those who are looking onward to its early possession go through life with gloom or sadness, rather than with the cheerful gladness which such a prospect might be expected to inspire.

But this "joy" will, if your faith be vigorous, stand proof against the changes and trials of this present life. Like your peace, it will remain in times of darkness and trial, and will often dispel the overhanging clouds of doubt and gloom. Numerous are the instances on record, which prove how joyful the Christian can be, even in trials from which flesh and blood naturally shrink with dismay. And what was the prophet's resolve? "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall, yet"—"I will trust," does he say? No. "I will be resigned?" No; but "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Would, my brethren, that we had more of this rejoicing spirit in the midst of afflictions! Paul and Silas may be in the dungeon, their feet made fast in the stocks, their flesh torn with the cruel scourge, and no friendly hand near to wash their stripes; but are they mourning over their troubles, and venting forth complaints concerning their hard lot? No, they are in joyous mood, and sing praises to God with "songs in the night." We may be like Lazarus, lowest among the lowly on the earth;

but what matter, if angels are sent from heaven to watch for our souls, and waft them, as they quit the body, to "Abraham's bosom?" Shall we not rejoice?

But where is this joy to be found? How few Christians have it! How few make it the object of their prayers, and the ardent desire of their hearts! To be joyful in religion, to rejoice in Christ and the "hope of glory" is looked upon as bordering upon enthusiasm; as if enthusiasm were to be allowed in nothing but in worldly matters. Dear fellow Christians, let me remind you that joy in believing is a duty, yea, as much a duty as love is. We are commanded to "rejoice in the Lord." Sinners, when first they come with lively faith and ardent longing hearts to the blood-stained cross of the Saviour, rejoice in their pardon, and the remission of their sins, with the joy of the captive set free from his chains, or the culprit whose sentence of death is remitted; but when the first warm feelings are past, we look in vain for that cheerful gladness of heart we might expect to find in an heir of immortal glory. It is really remarkable how light an estimate we form of our Christian privileges, and how little of anxiety we have to enjoy them. How seldom do we soar in contemplation to the joys beyond the grave! How few are the times, when we give the wings of faith to our souls, and enter the gates of Paradise, which lead to the throne and the glory of Christ! How seldom do we abstract our thoughts from the things that are around us, and fix them upon the "King," as He appears "in His beauty"—the Saviour, as He sits on the throne of His Majesty, "high and lifted up" above the seraphim of heaven! The joy, which lights up the Christian's eye with brightness, is in how many cases the joy of the world, arising from the excitement and captivations of worldly pleasure! The travellers to Zion, by their silence, and in many cases their sadness too, when spiritual things are talked of, would lead a stranger to conclude that sorrow, rather than joy, is the atmosphere they shall breathe in heaven. Dear friends, this ought not to be. Every converted Christian should feel that he has in this life something or heaven to expect in his heart. However high your conceptions may be of the full glory, and deep, heart-entrancing gladness of the kingdom of God on high, they only will possess it who have heavenly fruits already growing in their hearts in this life. In heaven those habits and tempers of mind will be perfected, which God now implants in the heart of the believer. Here they are imperfect and must of necessity be so. Hereafter they will be perfected for ever; mark, not removed and others implanted, but the same which we now have, purified from their imperfections, and sanctified to complete perfection. If therefore you hope to dwell in glory, the elements of which are "peace and joy" in the presence of Christ, you must now look to have this "peace and joy" already begun in your heart. The "peace and joy" of heaven burst forth in melodies of holy praise from redeemed souls; but with us how often

"Hosannas languish on our tongues,  
And our devotion dies!"

My brethren, do you believe in deed and in truth? Is Christ your Saviour? Has His grace changed and converted you? If so, oh! throw open your hearts to catch the sacred influences of the Spirit. Hang not "your harp on the willows," as thinking you may not rejoice, but "rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice."

III. But the apostle prays that they may not only have "joy and peace in believing," but that they might be filled "with all joy and peace in believing." Mark too the end; that they might "abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." Hence learn, you are not to be satisfied with a small measure of peace and joy. We are contented with a little, when we ought to have



much. If you are Christians at all, you must be advancing Christians. You are to "grow in grace and knowledge;" and each step you take in this onward path will discover to the eye of your faith new causes of "joy and peace," to gladden and strengthen your heart. Your souls are not to be half full, but to be filled even to overflowing. Your peace should strike its roots deeper—your joy should increase, as you advance yearly and weekly towards your heavenly home. Does the sailor, as he approaches his native land, feel no deeper joys, no more gladdening emotion, than he did when he embarked from a distant shore? Surely he does, And just so should the Christian feel, as he is borne onward, through the grace of God, in his heavenward voyage. He has storms and tempests to pass through, and sometimes by their power he is driven back in his course—clouds and darkness of temptation and sin at times almost hide the polar star of his faith from his view; but it is his God who rules in the tempest and the storm—no temptation shall cause him to perish, if only he lean on his Saviour, and trust to His guidance, for He has promised safely to lead him to the haven of rest. The very conviction that he is each week approaching nearer to his native land, his immortal home beyond the skies, should indeed give increasing joy to his heart, and a richer gladness to his soul. "The Lord hath done great things for us already, whereof we rejoice." Then we may, and should be glad, at what God *has* done; how much rather when we behold the great things, and the good which He has "prepared" and promised "to them that love Him!"

"The hill of Zion yields  
A thousand sacred sweets,  
Before we reach the heavenly fields,  
Or walk the golden streets."

Dear friends, are you Christians in heart, as in profession? Then this "joy and peace" should be yours. But if you are only formal professors, you have no right to expect it. Even if you have a "joy and peace" such as the world gives, it is strangely out of place, for you stand on the brink of a yawning hell, with the sword of Divine Justice suspended above you. What "peace and joy" can yours be, who are at war with your Maker, as all unconverted men are, by your sins, and carrying on a crusade against all that God loves, and all that He has commanded? Surely gladness is strangely out of place in such a soul. How shocked would you be to see a malefactor going to execution with gladness in his eye, and mirth on his tongue! But is it one half so sad, as the conduct of those who are thinking only of the world's joys, when at any moment they may find themselves in the presence of an offended God, and the next be sent away, with all their sins on their heads, to the darkness and weeping and wailing of hell? Oh! dear friends, think not of being mirthful and glad, unless your sins are pardoned, and the "light of God's countenance" be shining on your souls. If there be no such thing as "joy and peace" in hell, how inconsistent for those who are hurrying thither to dress up their face with smiles and gladness, while their hearts are ripening for the harvest of woe!

Christians in deed and in truth—very briefly on the means of increasing your "joy and peace," and I have done. You must be very careful to "keep your hearts with all diligence," avoiding all sin of every kind and every degree. Sin is a deadly blight, which will blast and wither all "the fruits of the Spirit," and turn your "joy and peace" into sadness and sorrow. We cannot have "joy and peace in believing," if we are indulging besetting sins and selfish wishes. Sin has its source in hell—"joy and peace" in heaven; and therefore they can never exist and be enjoyed together.

Again: though living in the world, you must "set your affections on things above," as their chief delight. You may derive pleasure from the things with which God's love surrounds you—you may gladden your heart with the many

joys of social life, and "rejoice in all that you put your hand unto wherein the Lord hath blessed you"—but all in low subordination to your spiritual happiness. It is a bad sign for your souls, if they find greater "joy and peace" in temporal things, than they do in the presence of God and communion with Him. Yet I fear there are but very few hearts, in which this sign would not be found. "Joy and peace in believing" should be as heaven, spreading a sacred influence over all your sources of earthly happiness, but not depending on them for existence. If thus it were the case with us, then would not temporal things so much impede our spiritual progress. Instead of dragging heavily on the chariot wheels of our souls, they would speed them heavenward, by setting in motion the affections of a heart filled with gratitude to the Giver of good. Guard then, I beseech you, against the influence of the world and temporal things. It is an influence which silently gains a wonderful power in the human heart, and has perilled and ruined for ever many an immortal spirit.

Lastly, live near to God! Oh! we are sadly to blame in this. We get so engrossed with the world and its occupations, that it is but little time we are engaged in communion with God our Saviour. We think it enough, to come to Him once or twice a day; and then how short the time! Oh! my dear friends, if only we had a clearer view of Christ in the fulness of His high perfections, we should find greater joy in His presence. Did we love Him as He deserves to be loved, who has saved our souls from death, we should be with Him oftener in silent meditation and secret prayer. Oh! who that has drunk deep at the streams of a Saviour's love—who that has tasted the graciousness of his mercy, and the waters of His bounty, does not cry out with David—"As panteth the hart for the water brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God?" Can you be surprised that the windows of heaven are closed, and no dew-drops of blessing descend, if your love be so cold, your desires so faint, and your delight in the Saviour so little?

Pray, then, oh! pray for stronger faith, for a livelier sense of your Saviour's love; press close up to the throne of grace with earnest importunity; strive to realise Gospel truths to your souls: then mark this sure result—as faith grows more vigorous, your "peace and joy in believing" will be greater; you will "abound" more and more "in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost," and thus daily become fitter for that world beyond the grave, where "peace" shall be perfected for ever, joy be increased beyond conception, and hope, with all its delightful anticipations, be lost and swallowed up in the fathomless ocean of that bliss, which awakens Hallelujahs of praise from angels' harps, and fills with holy rapture the kingdom of Christ and of God.

## LOT'S WIFE.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. RICHARD WINTER HAMILTON, D.D.

PREACHED AT THE ANNIVERSARY OF SALEM CHAPEL, YORK,  
ON MONDAY EVENING, JULY 14, 1847.

*“And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. And Lot said unto them, Oh! not so, my Lord: behold now, Thy servant hath found grace in Thy sight, and Thou hast magnified Thy mercy, which Thou hast showed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die: behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. And He said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken. Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.”—Genesis xix. 15—26.*

*“Remember Lot's wife.”—Luke xvii. 32.*

THE scenery, dear brethren, of which this historical narrative gives an account, and to which the historical application contains an allusion, is most affrighting. It is of constant and continuous reference throughout the inspired Record. Do men openly and ostentatiously transgress? “They declare their sin as Sodom: they hide it not.” (Isaiah iii. 9.) Are Divine yearning and compassion moved on behalf of sinners? “How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim?”—cities round about Sodom and Gomorrah. (Hosea xi. 8.) Is irrevocable and irreversible judgment denounced? “As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the Lord, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it.” (Jeremiah xlix. 18.) Is punishment sudden and unexpected? “Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her.” (Lamentations iv. 6.) Is the rejection of the call of the Gospel denounced as the darkest of crimes and the extremest of offences? “It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment.” (Mark vi. 11.) “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” (Jude 7.)

"God—turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow; making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." (2 Peter ii. 4 and 6.) We perpetually hear of it. It meets us again and again. Nor is it committed to memory alone; nor dependent alone on the inspired Record. That scenery still survives. The valley, once luxuriously rich and fertile, standing thick with dwellings, and teeming with multitudes who, because of their exceeding wickedness, were destroyed—that valley now lies engulfed; and the stillness of completed judgment sits awfully and silently upon it. First there swept down a storm of fire, blasting and consuming all; then the earth yawned, and waves broke forth; and, still extending, hid the land, which so recently had rung with jocund mirth. Nor have they deserted their channels. They are still to be found there. But they move not as other seas. No cheering concert of birds enlivens them; no breath of heaven fans their waters. That ocean emits hollow sounds, and pestiferous exhalations. Nothing lives in it or around it. There the bird tries not its wing; there no fish vaults or gambols; the meanest shrub is stunted; and every leaf dies.

The catastrophe was dread and overwhelming. How soon had all taken place! How soon had all terminated! The sun which had just arisen there, as these transactions occurred, scarcely peered above the horizon. There lay the beautiful scene! The cheerful cities decking the hollow valley, and shining with the earliest sun-ray; as the luminary, advancing with regal strides, unrolled the scenery, as it had been a map! All lay as in slumber, to be roused by a gentle awaking! What note indicated terror and despair? The birds were singing "among the branches;" "and the little hills rejoiced on every side." (Psalm lxxv. 12.) The whole scene was enamelled with beauty and loveliness. But there ~~is~~ one lurid cloud! It reddens with a sudden glare. Flakes of fire, and streams of sulphur, burst from its bosom. And now arises a universal outcry—a wail—a shriek! They no longer mock. They jest no more. The boast dies away in dismay and consternation. The most fearless bosom is daunted. The stoutest hearts quail. Children, kindling, rush from their sports into the arms of their parents, with a furious embrace. The streets run down with flames. "Fire runs along upon the ground." (Exodus ix. 23.) Habitations crush in their fall. Hovel and palace are alike involved in a rapid conflagration. How roars the blast! How, raised from the abyss, heaves the ocean in its terrific rush! How all sinks and perishes before the rage of its fury! "The smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." (Genesis xix. 28.) Can we conceive any ruin more wide—any destruction more indiscriminate? All pronounces that thousands and tens of thousands were extinguished without thought or notice, and that now their memorial has perished; and yet, how wide and indiscriminate soever was the overthrow, one relic is preserved in all its entirety,—one monument of guilt and vengeance is spared. No other name is left, but one epitaph is engraven; and while all else sank beneath the billows of Asphaltites, "as lead in the mighty waters" (Exodus xv. 10), there stands up one thing to be noticed—one name to mark—one epitaph to read!—"Remember Lot's wife!"

Doubtless this relic would not have been brought forth and preserved from the promiscuous ruin which involved all else, if there had not been connected with it something for observation and instruction. Otherwise the pall would have covered all—oblivion would have overshadowed all; but in that one case oblivion was interdicted by the sentence, which we are now summoned to consider. Our Lord said it after the lapse of two thousand years; and two thousand more have elapsed since He spoke it; but it still presents a lesson to learn—a warning to consult. There are still evident the particulars of her guilt, and the reasons of her punishment; and the ground is invested with monumental

solemnity. God grant that, while we endeavour to gather up the lessons of interest connected with this event, they may be so rendered useful to us, as that we may not now have met together in vain!

She was made a notable and conspicuous example of judicial infliction; so as to "justify the ways of God to men." Why was she overtaken by so signal a doom? Why was she transformed into so fearful a beacon? She was probably not different from others, her fellow-townswomen—the votaries of fashion, and the slaves of custom. We possess some intimation of the habits which then existed, and the tastes which then prevailed. "The iniquity of Sodom" was "pride, fulness of bread; and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters." (Ezekiel xvi. 49.) No encomium is pronounced on her; but how differently is her partner regarded! "God delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. For that righteous man, dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." (2 Peter ii. 4, 7, and 8.) Probably she was frivolous, light, and careless in her conduct;—her character made up of negations, rather than of positive vices; and her faults probably originated in the unfavourable influence of the society in which she mingled. "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." (1 Timothy v. 6.) We see a judicial infliction overtaking her conduct, which was marked by the following features:—

1. Disobedience. It is the business of principle to obey the right and the rule. It does not matter what the law prescribes; for the majesty which invests the government of God, descends on all the acts of His legislation; and it is not for us to question their greater or less magnitude, or their superior or subordinate authority. He shows us what He wills; and it is our part to obey. This rule is illustrated by many providential occurrences in nature, but by many more in religion. Abraham, receiving a call, "went out, not knowing whither he went." (Hebrews xi. 8.) In the case before us there was to be no idolatry of home,—no favourite objects to preserve and bring away. They were to come out quickly and unburdened. The general command was to disregard all; and even the particular precept could not be more distinct: "Escape for thy life! Look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain! Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed!" (Genesis xix. 17.) Then commenced a struggle in her mind. Many whom she loved were left behind: could not a summons be delivered to them? She "looked back"—perhaps *turned back*! Here was her disobedience. Only obey the voice of God, and it shall be well; but if thou disobey, ruin will be the result.

2. Ingratitude. It was not ordinary kindness, but particular and pre-eminent that was shown to her husband, herself, and her household. "Haste thee, Escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither." (Genesis xix. 22.) As if His fury were stayed till the complete deliverance of these, His favourite charge. And for her bringing forth out of the city, angels put forth a benevolent seizure; they "laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him." (Genesis xix. 16.) A special provision for her safety and comfort was granted at the intercession of her husband—one devoted city being spared. (Verse 21.) But there was no appreciation of that interposing act. This was her ingratitude; for this she was punished; and thus God will treat us, if we malign and refuse His grace, and show ourselves insensible to all the riches of His goodness. "Not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance: but after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath." (Romans ii. 4, 5.)

3. Reluctance. Her's was an averted countenance. Are we surprised at this? Think of the awe—the panic—the agitation! Think of the natural instinct which attached her to home. Was it that her heart grudged to leave behind some favourite, whose misery excited her pity and commiseration? None of these feelings are manifested. But there is a wistful and hankering look. Her eye seems enamoured of what she must abandon; the objects of vanity—her companionships—whatever she coveted—her pursuits—her friends—her abode—her flocks—all that she was leaving; and though she saved what was of greater value, her heart went after her covetousness (Ezekiel xxxiii. 31); and it was all concentrated in that look. In proportion to the comparative estimate of present and future possessions, will be the faith that cares not

for houses and lands ; but only pants after that which is beyond all,—eternal life.

4. Rebellion. There naturally springs up the ruth of kindred, and regret for their loss ; but there is also a questioning whether it be not a severe exaction, a harsh judgment. What crimes had they committed ? She yearned towards them. She had lived in the same atmosphere, and drunk in the same spirit. Were all to be hurried away ? She was disturbed and annoyed. "Mark the disproportion !" This appears to have been her thought. 'Why was punishment applied on such a scale ? Why was there so bitter a portion in their cup ?' All this is very hardening.

5. Distrust. Might there not have been unnecessary harshness ? Might it not be a false alarm ? Could not science explain the phenomena ? Would not the fiery tempest exhaust itself ? Might it not be well to pause and examine ? Was there not reason to chide her fears ? And so, while the matter is brought to such a judgment as our reason can suggest, we lose the only opportunity of escape.

6. Indecision. This paralyzes all, and is unaccountable in such a case as her's. See how the waves threaten to surround her ! Yet she wavers, instead of hastening her retreat. As she ponders whether to recede or advance, the fiery element gradually encloses her. She appears transfixed ; and as she turns and halts, her associates have left her, and she is now alone. Oh ! when the smoke and sulphurous vapour assailed her, what cogitations of mind must she have experienced—what harrowings of spirit ! Those ruinous courses of waywardness and folly—to what do they lead at last ? "Remember Lot's wife !" See her attitude ! Hear her scream ! Then all human features are obliterated ; she becomes solidified—charred—calcined ; and we gaze on "a pillar of salt !"

Thus we see the particulars in her conduct which led to her fate. But what practical views may be deduced from it ? What is the command of the Gospel ? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ !" (Acts xvi. 31.) And what is the sin of rejecting it ? It is the sin of disobedience ; and they "that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be punished with everlasting destruction." (2 Thessalonians i. 8, 9.) To you this Gospel is presented ; and your profiting will be great if you trust in it for salvation, and meet it with gratitude corresponding. But if you turn away, you will incur the odium of ingratitude, with which nothing can be compared. The will never moves in two opposite ways. All her heart was on one side then ; how is it with yours now ? And will you "pluck out" an offending "right eye ?" (Matthew v. 29.) For it is just like the question left to Lot's wife. You feel rebellious against the judgment of God ; can you wonder at having to bear it yourselves ? God is punishing our evil ways ; and "upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest." (Psalms xi. 6.) But you have sceptical thoughts, and so had she ; and you may go on speculating till, like her, you are finally ruined. Indecision destroyed her. She was warned as you are ; and you, by dallying as she did, render prayer vain, and effort abortive.

Thus have we endeavoured to trace the peculiar resemblances between that distant event and our own times ; which, in many respects present a counterpart to those distant ages. Why are we to "Remember Lot's wife," but that there was something in her conduct to rebuke and instruct us. Bear with us a few moments, while we indulge in a few reflections suggested by the subject.

1. How small a thing may prevent our salvation ! Lot's wife may have been gay and volatile—nothing more. What was the character of society in that day ? "They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded : but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all." (Luke xvii. 28, 29.) Whatever stands in the way of our salvation—whether sin, or temptation, or trifling—puts that salvation in jeopardy, and exposes us to ruin not less than unreserved rejection of the Gospel. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ?" (Mark viii. 36.) Here is the mighty stake ! Our Lord propounds the question ! But men would often sacrifice all to ambition and wealth ; and yet obtain nothing to counterbalance the sacrifice. How many thus lose their souls ! They pass their lives in a mere dream ;—not obtaining any portion at all—even the shadow of a shade. But what were all the things that Lot's wife left behind ?

Why should she care for them, in comparison with her own and her family's safety? But her heart was not weaned from them; and, persisting in that attachment, she perished. It matters not what! A fable—an imaginary good that cannot be attained or grasped—may keep you out of the kingdom of God.

2. The increased misery of perishing within the reach of recovering mercy. Lot's wife was in the track of safety. All was promise and hope. There rises Zoar on the glittering height, to which she might escape; with angels for her convoy and guard; but she "looked back," and perished in the route of deliverance. Just as all will perish now who, like Nadab and Abihu, make light of extraordinary privileges; and who, like the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for whose fate Jesus was bathed in tears, neglect "the time of their visitation!" (Luke xix. 44.)

3. The evil of a careless state of mind. Lot's wife was not fully possessed of the fear proper to her situation. Led by the example of those among whom she dwelt, she had no just view of the evil of sin. Left by her companions, she thought to return; but the resolve was too late! Advance was as hopeless as retreat! "They say still unto them that despise Me—'The Lord hath said ye shall have peace!' And they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart—'No evil shall come upon you!'" (Jeremiah xxiii. 17.) But their "judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." (2 Peter ii. 3.)

4. The misery of apostacy. Many have a disposition to what is right; but there is nothing fixed—no true change. How many have been thus hindered in their course! They were almost persuaded to be Christians, (Acts xxvi. 28;) but they "looked back;" and our Lord indicates that this disposition leads to condemnation:—"No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke ix. 62.)

5. The fearful state of mind, when God leaves the sinner, and abandons him to his own will. In the case of Lot's wife, God could do no more, and the angels went on. The last desire for deliverance left her. She "looked back"—stopped—and stood still for ever! She may have thought she could overtake her companions; and such a thought may have passed through *your* mind—that you could gain your former position, which you may have lost by your carelessness, when you please, and again become what you were before. "Remember Lot's wife!" Fear God's desertion! It led to *her* abandonment and it may lead to *yours*;—leaving you to your folly and sin. He "is joined to idols: let him alone!" (Hosea iv. 17.) Many think it hard, when they look back on the world from which they are called to come out; but, if in a right state of mind, you can no longer enjoy it. You have left the world. It may frown and complain; but it is better to have it against you than in your favour.

To all flight is necessary. Have *you* fled? Are you in the act of flight? Are you pressing on, or halting, or looking back? "Remember Lot's wife!" There must be a separation. "Come out of her, My people; that ye be not partaker of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues!" (Revelation xviii. 4.) "The Lord will destroy this city!" (Genesis xix. 14.) May you respond to the summons of His Word to quit it!

But you have made the renouncement. "I am Thine!" (1 Kings xx. 4.) "My heart is fixed!" (Psalms lvii. 7.) You have said this, not capriciously, but as your habitual state of mind. Are you relapsing? "Remember Lot's wife!" And look up, when you think of this world as vain and deceptive! Look up to the New Jerusalem; and say of all else—"We need it not!" This world is "reserved to fire! The elements shall melt with fervent heat! The earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up!" (2 Peter iii. 7, 10.) Oh! what a fate is reserved for it;—when it shall be scorched by the lightnings of heaven! Could you then look up and say—"We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness?" (2 Peter iii. 13.) Then, taking the course which God's Word points out, "beware lest ye also, being led away by the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness!" (2 Peter iii. 17.) May God bring us safely through that course; and be it ours to say—and with this we conclude the discourse—We "are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them who believe to the saving of the soul!" (Hebrews x. 39.)

NOTES OF LECTURES  
ON  
PROPERTY AND PAUPERISM.  
DELIVERED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
BY THE  
REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.

LECTURE VII.

HOSTILITY to Savings-Banks is excited among masters by the fear of their enabling workmen to hold out against them. This is conceding what we have argued for ;—that the workmen may become rich enough to be independent of the Poor's Rates ; and we should like to see them able to dictate, in some degree, the amount of their wages ; so that the latter might bear a higher proportion than at present to the Rent of Land, and the Profit of Stock.\* Rather than a helpless and profligate crew, we should prefer a well paid and well principled peasantry ; though they might occasionally strike their tools, and hold out for higher wages.† But such fears are exaggerated. The two parties would soon arrive at an adjustment. Nature provides against the restraint on marriage being carried too far ; so that we may always be sure of a sufficient supply of labourers. But the law of Pauperism does not carry the restraint far enough. It were to be wished that legislators would leave Nature alone ; and she would balance properly between animal instinct on the one hand, and self-preservation, or the higher principles of the mind, on the other.

The alarm about Savings-Banks is chiefly confined to masters of small capital. But high wages are generally compensated for by the higher value of the services rendered. In those parishes where low wages are made up from the Poor's Rates, the farmers complain of their work being ill done ; but in those trades where the workmen are well paid, the interests both of masters and servants are better promoted. This is cheering ; as it shows that the improvement of the *lower* would be an advantage to the *higher* classes.

It has the look of kindness to the poor, to make up their deficient wages from the Poor's Rates.‡ But this is neutralized if it be shown, that the law creates the difficulty it provides for ; and that, by increasing the number of men a very little, it reduces wages very much.§ It would have been better if law had ceased to interfere one step sooner ;—enacting “a determinate virtue,” or “a virtue of perfect obligation,” instead of passing on to “an indeterminate virtue,” or “a virtue of imperfect obligation.”|| It is undeniable that marriage is precipitated, and vice increased, by a law which palliates the consequences both of imprudence and of vice.¶ The deficiency in wages being made up from Rates determined by the higher classes, who will make them as low as possible, labourers are placed at the mercy of others, when they might have been the arbiters of their own condition.\*\* Under the impression that they must be provided for, they will marry carelessly. They have no inducement

\* For Dr. Chalmers's matured opinions on these two subjects, see Volume 20 of his Works (“Political Economy,” Volume 2), Pages 42 and 90.

† “Combinations of Workmen for the purpose of raising Wages” are considered at length in Chapters 20 and 21 of the Lecturer's “Christian and Civic Economy,” Volume 3, Pages 143 to 272; republished in his “Christian and Economic Polity,” Volume 2 (Volume 15 of his Works), Pages 334 to 395.

‡ See Lecture 5, Page 115. “The Effect of a Poor-Rate, when applied in aid of Defective Wages,” forms the subject of a Chapter (18) in Dr. Chalmers's “Christian and Civic Economy” (Volume 3, Page 63); and in his “Christian and Economic Polity,” Volume 2 (forming Volume 15 of his Works), Page 267.

§ See Lecture 5, Page 115 ; and Lecture 6, Page 138.

|| See Lecture 1, Page 52.

¶ See Lecture 6, Page 138.

\*\* See Lecture 6, Page 139.



to economize ; and, when fluctuation occurs, they must submit to the terms of their employers. It is true, if the remuneration be very low, they receive assistance from the parish ; but when thousands are in the same condition, that allowance must be very meagre. Hence all are overworked, and the market is over distended, at the very time when it is most desirable that the excess should be cleared off. Here we see the evil caused by reckless improvidence on the part of workmen ; and, so far as the Poor's Rate adds to their improvidence and their numbers, it aggravates the evil.

But the possession of capital by the lower orders, would not only smooth fluctuations, but raise the average of their condition. The law of Pauperism has acted as a lying cheat, to lure them from the road to comfort and independence. Many think their possession of capital would give them the power of combining at critical periods, and of overthrowing society ; but, so far as the experiment has been tried, it has proved their experiments to be groundless. When good wages are given, confidence prevails between master and men ; and if the latter be more costly as to wages, they are more valuable as to services.\*

We should not take so much pains with this problem, if the moral habits and even the Christianity of the people were not so linked with it. Many of you will be appointed to Scottish parishes ; and may ward off from them a Poor-Law ; which, though bearing on its forehead the appearance of kindness, is their bitterest enemy in disguise. Teach your people the necessary duty of providing for their own ; that they may say with the apostle—" These hands have ministered unto my necessities." (Acts xx. 34.) It is still arithmetically true, that the eternity of one man is of more value than the temporal interests of an empire ; but so linked are they together, that a clergyman acting as I have recommended, is the best friend to the human race. You have nothing to fear from the people, as Talleyrand said, if you treat them with frankness.

They are blessed who give ; but they are more blessed who refrain from receiving. Do not spare the rich ; but give to the poor the second head of your discourses. Encourage those who are not able to give ; but who are struggling to be kept from receiving. If they were a little more idle, they might obtain assistance. But no ! They try what they can do with more work and better management. The sum which they thus relinquish, they give to others who are more helpless. You may take the names of the original contributors ; but there is one contributor, still more noble, whose name will not be in the catalogue. He might have got relief, but he refrained from taking it. The others gave of their abundance ; but he of the sweat of his brow. I hope, by your instructions, you will form hundreds of such men ; and will give them the sincere homage of your admiration.

But suppose these men, from age or sickness, are obliged to receive aid : they may still carry into effect the same noble principle, by being as little burdensome as possible ; and, if they so act, they will be recorded in the book of heaven as the benefactors of their species. It is easy for the affluent to throw a gift into the treasury, and sit by the fire-side, and live as softly as before ; but the poor man who takes as little as possible, may have a receiving hand, but he has a giving heart ; and to him will be assigned, in the the day of reckoning, the blessedness of a giver †.

Ostensible benevolence does much mischief. It is better to practise that precept of Scripture, which enjoins us not to let our " left hand know what" our " right hand doeth" (Matthew vi. 3) ; which I am disposed to interpret into an injunction that, when disposed to give, we should not let those on our left hand know what we are doing to those on our right.§

\* Dr Chalmers has entered into a full consideration of the Wages of Labour in the Seventeenth Chapter of his " Christian and Civic economy," Volume 3, Page 17. See Volume 15 of His Works (" Christian and Economic Polity," Volume 2), Page 226.

† Students of Divinity.

‡ The striking views which are slightly touched upon here are carried out to a length more suited to their importance, in Dr. Chalmers's Sermon on the " Superior Blessedness of the Giver to that of the Receiver," in Volume 11 of his Works (" Sermons preached on Public Occasions"), Page 387.

§ Savings-Banks, referred to in the conclusion of the last Lecture and the commencement of this, are treated at large in Chapter 19 of the Reverend Lecturer's " Christian and Civic Economy" (Volume 3, Page 108) ; republished in Volume 15 of his Works (" Christian and Economic Polity," Volume 2), Page 304.

## WALKING WITH GOD.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. HUGH M'NEILE, D.D.

PREACHED IN ST. JUDE'S CHURCH, LIVERPOOL,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 22, 1847.

*"And Enoch walked with God."*—Genesis v. 24.

HOLY Scripture abounds with descriptions of these two things :—coming to God, and walking with God. The expressions in themselves imply an order of precedence, because it is obvious, that, before a man can walk with God, he must have come to Him. I purpose this morning to give you some directions as to the way in which a restored man should walk with God. Before I proceed, however, let me entreat you to remember, and seriously to ponder, that you have something far more important to do than merely to listen to me. You have to bear in mind that there is a real transaction going on between you and Almighty God ; that He knows and sees what you are, and what you are thinking and feeling at this moment ; that eternity is at hand ; and that my speaking to you is only one among many means which it has pleased God to appoint, in order to awaken you, to instruct you, to leave you without excuse, and so to vindicate His own honour and glory and truth in the day of judgment, whether you are saved or not.

Why should not all men walk with God ? The first man, in the first instant of his creation, so walked ; he lived with God ; going out and coming in, rising up and lying down, in hours of active industry and in hours of peaceful recreation, God was his constant companion, his guide, his friend. Adam knew this, and was happy. Why should not all his children so walk and be happy too ? The reason is, that before he had any children he himself ceased so to walk. He turned away from God and sinned ; conscious guilt made him afraid, and fear made him fly. To fly effectually was impossible ; nothing could hide him from God : he was detected. A sense of guilt, accompanied with a sense of detection is intolerable. He could no longer endure the presence of the Searcher of his heart, and he therefore had recourse to a life among creatures. He could walk with them without being reproached ; he could stifle his sense of guilt among them, because it was not accompanied by a sense of detection by them, and therefore their companionship was rather soothing than otherwise ; but the presence of God had become wormwood to him. This is the root of that evil heart of worldliness, unbelief, and enmity, which to this day, and in all, has occasioned departure from the living God. This is the real secret of the description which the apostle gives, by inspiration, of every man in his natural state, that he is "without God in the world ;" not without Him considered geographically in space, (that cannot be,) but without Him considered morally, through want of congeniality of character.

Now, viewing men as they are, and as they are plainly and solemnly described to be in Holy Scripture, instead of asking—'Why should not all men walk with God ?'—another and a very different question suggests itself—'How can any man walk with God in the enjoyment of familiar companionship ? How can any descendant of Adam retrace his father's steps, reascend

the height from which his father fell, and repose again in that happy home from which his father wickedly and wilfully exiled himself ? ' This is the question of questions, eternally vital to every one of us. Would to God that you were all touched with a deep, unfeigned concern about the answer to this question ! O ! gracious and merciful God ! create and make such concern in every heart here present ; arouse every callous conscience, enlighten every dark mind, dissipate every dangerous delusion, give victory over every ensnaring temptation, and restore us—poor, helpless, wandering prodigals that we are—restore us to the heart, and the home, and the companionship of our God, that we may walk with Thee !

My brethren, why should I tell you again what you all know already concerning the way to God ? Nay, rather let me ask why should I not tell it you again and again ? why should I not reiterate that glorious way ? Angels never weary in praising it ; devils never weary in execrating it ; infidels never weary in denying it ; converted men never weary in trusting it ; and let minister and people, therefore, never weary in proclaiming it, in honouring it, in magnifying it, in adoring it. Jesus Christ " is the Way." Gracious, glorious name ! Jesus Christ in the beginning was " with God " and " was God ; " Jesus Christ, in the " fulness of time," was with man, and was man ; He was made flesh, He was " made of a woman, made under the law ; " God walking with men, that in and through Him, men, might walk with God. He came to reclaim and restore the wanderer, to regain the height from which Adam fell ; nay, more, to scale a height far above any where Adam ever stood, and to take His people with Him. " I am come," He said himself, " that ye might have life ; " and not only so—He added, " and that ye might have it more abundantly ; " more abundantly than in your original creation. Not content with giving life to the extent that Adam possessed it, from which His people might fall as Adam fell, Jesus Christ gives life to the extent of a union with God, from which there is no fall. Harken to His own wonderful description of it : " I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be one even as We are One, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." Marvellous, truly wonderful is this elevation. It is on this platform alone, that any man can walk with God. What was thus done in the fulness of the appointed time had been designed from the beginning. God sees the end from the beginning ; nothing new can arise to perfect intelligence ; and from the beginning God acts on what is designed to the end. Christ is described in Holy Scripture as " the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world ; " slain in design—a design which nothing could alter, nothing frustrate. On the credit of that purpose " ordered in all things and sure," salvation was communicated to men in all ages of the world. The way to God by Christ was as true and as real, though not so plainly opened, in the days of Enoch, as it is in our own. In that way, and in that way only, " Enoch walked with God ; " God acting on the credit of His own purpose, and ministering that reconciliation to the spirit of His servant, which, in the sequel of His purpose, was to be rendered righteous by the work of His dear Son. In Christ it was, that Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, won their way to holy fellowship with God ; and whether that way were announced as the " seed of the woman," the " seed of Abraham," or the " seed of David ; " whether it were declared as the " burnt offering," the " bleeding Lamb," or the " mercy-seat ; " whether it were foretold as the High priest, the faithful Prophet, or the victorious King ; whether it were predicted as the " Branch," the " Shepherd," or the " desire of all nations ; " whether it were proclaimed at Bethlehem by attendant angels as " Christ the Lord," or, more plainly still, by the apostles themselves, when, filled with the Holy Ghost, they went through the cities of Greece, telling everywhere, to Jew and Gentile, that by the Man Jesus Christ, dead and alive again, was preached forgiveness of sins ; still it was the same way from first to last,—the same Alpha and Omega, the same Son of God, the same Son of man, the same only Saviour, God in Christ, walking in pardoning love amongst fallen men, that restored men through Christ might walk in grateful love with God. This, this is the way—the only way.

Now I desire to give you, as plainly and scripturally as possible, some instructions in reference to this walk with God. First, then, my friends, and chiefest, because it will secure the rest, walk confidently with God. Confidence is constantly opposed to suspicion. In so far as confidence is increased, you

entertain no suspicion ; and in so far as suspicion is entertained, you feel no confidence. Now I put it thus because it may be of use to some of you to perceive, that as soon as you withdraw confidence from God, you are really suspecting God. I am well aware, my friends, of the ready answer, ' Oh ! far be it from us to suspect God—it is ourselves we suspect when our doubts overcome us.' That is a mistake. You will perhaps think it strange when I tell you, and yet you will find it true, that you do not suspect yourselves. You know yourselves to be sinners—it is past suspicion, it is certainty ; and if the promises of God had been made only to such men and women as are not sinners, then you could not be expected to exercise confidence in them for yourselves. But is it not a fact, that the promises of pardoning love and saving grace are made to men and women who are sinners ? Why not then exercise confidence in them ? Is it because you suspect yourselves ? I tell you nay ; you do not *suspect* yourselves to be sinners—you know that you are sinners, you know that you are precisely the description of persons to whom the promises are made. Why, then, not confide in them ? Because you suspect that God will not keep them to sinners—although He made them to sinners. Consider, my dear friends, what I say. Take it seriously to heart, that you deceive yourselves when you suppose that you suspect yourselves. No, the suspicion is on the other side, and a most unworthy one it is. You suspect God ; you suspect that He will not keep to sinners promises which nevertheless He made to sinners. Now this ought not to be so ; for God is " faithful and true." " Hath He said, and shall He not make it good ? hath He spoken and shall it not come to pass ? " St. Paul says of Him, in writing to the Corinthian church—" God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." " God is faithful." Our confidence rests upon His faithfulness. Shrink not back, then, into the deceit that you do not suspect Him, but yourselves. It is not so ; unbelief suspects Him. Yet He cannot, in fact, deny Himself. No one can be unfaithful to another without first being unfaithful to himself ; no one can injure another without first injuring himself ; no one can rob another of his property without first robbing himself of his honesty ; and God cannot disappoint any one who trusts in His truth without being Himself guilty of falsehood. He cannot lie ; He is " faithful and true." He describes His people in Holy Scripture as found of Him—" dead in trespasses and sins ;" He describes them as " without strength," and by various other phrases, as strongly descriptive of sinful creatures as any that He can find ; and while He is so describing them, in the very same breath, as it were, in the very same sentence, He " commends His love to them, in that while they were yet sinners Christ died for them." Now do you know, or can you find, anything to say of yourselves more than what God says of you at the very moment when He is commending His love to you ? Jesus Christ died for sinners and rose again. This is a faithful and true saying of God, meant to be confided in, worthy to be received with confidence by every man. Receive it with confidence. And if you say—" We do believe this truth, we cannot doubt the truth that Christ died for sinners and rose again ;" then hear another—" He that believeth is justified from all things, from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses ;" he that believeth " has passed from death unto life." This is another faithful saying, worthy to be received with confidence by every man. Receive it with confidence ; and what follows ? You are " justified from all things ;" you have forgiveness of sins ; you have the " blessedness of the man, to whom God will not impute sin." " the blessedness of the man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered," the blessedness of the man to whom God " imputeth righteousness without works." Lay this to your hearts, and " walk with God."

Is it possible, then, to declare the Gospel proclamation too freely ? No, it is impossible ; language cannot do it. We are stammerers at the best, and cannot proclaim the blessing with the freedom with which God bestows it. It is for lack of this overflowing freeness, that we succeed so rarely in bringing men to repentance. Nothing can change man's mind towards God but the overflowing pardoning mercy of God towards man ; the enmity that is there, cannot be extracted by any process but the suction of tender pardoning love ; and there is nothing which can touch the chords of real penitence in a sinner's heart, and make them vibrate, but the finger of free forgiveness ; they lie too

deep for anything else. The law may lacerate, but it cannot vibrate to cause penitence in the heart; it may cause the hand to be raised against the flesh; it may cause the scourge to be resorted to, and bodily austerities to be inflicted; it may cause "rivers of oil" to be poured out for the sin of the soul; it may cause costly sacrifice; but it can never produce penitential feeling. Confidence in pardoning love, and a generous shame at the doing or thinking what is hateful to God, are twin-born graces in every Christian's soul. Repentance is not a duty originating with man, which he must perform and present unto God in order that afterwards, and because of this, he may receive forgiveness; but it is a blessing bestowed by God upon man, when God is ministering to man's spirit the conviction of forgiveness. It then becomes a part of the description of the man who receives forgiveness; and because it is a part of his description, it is mistaken by many as if it were a preliminary condition. It is our high privilege to proclaim forgiveness of sins, and to declare that God absolves "all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel;" and what then? Let us pray to Him that He may "grant us true repentance, and His Holy Spirit." There are two clauses descriptive of the man whom God blesses, and both clauses are then made subjects of prayer. It is not as though they were preliminary conditions to be wrought by man; they are, in truth, preparatory blessing bestowed by God; and they are bestowed in order that, while grateful love to Him arises in the heart, a penitential feeling in reference to our own condition may arise also; and that, while we are overflowing with unutterable gratitude for His mercy, we may fall before Him in the dust and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Yes, my brethren, and it is just when you are most assured that He is merciful, that you will most feel yourselves sinners; and it is when you know without doubt that He will show mercy, that your supplications for mercy will be redoubled. Confidence that He will have mercy, and prayer that He may have mercy, always go together.

If, then, you would "walk with God," cultivate this confidence. Walk without suspicion; remember who and what He is, and trust Him. If only those who are free from sin could trust Him, what were this? There is no glory here, comparatively speaking. It is, indeed, directly and positively, a glorious thing, for a holy creature, standing in its original integrity, to enjoy God and walk with God, and never to separate from God, which is the position of the holy angels; but the glory of this position is, as it were, "no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth;" and the "glory that excelleth" is redeeming glory, which stoops to the dust and takes a beggar from the dunghill to set him among princes, which discovers in the deep of God's almighty resources a way, and a righteous way, of turning a rebel into a child, a persecutor into an apostle, a fiend into a saint. Know ye not, that "the saints shall judge angels?" This is the most glorious thing that we know of God, "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," whereby the sinner is brought to trust in Him; and the glory of this is magnified, when, in despite of infirmity, in defiance of sin, after the tempter has actually succeeded in drawing the Christian into some false path, confidence in God triumphs, and the broken and bleeding heart, under a sense of guilt, opens itself to God, and says—"Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight, that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and clear when Thou judgest; restore to me the joy of Thy free Spirit, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." Remember, dear friends, always remember in this connection, that it was after the man of God, the prophet specially inspired to declare God's message, had plainly said to the sinning king, "God hath put away thy sin," that the penitent psalm was felt and written. If David had never been assured that his sin was forgiven, he would never have repented; he could not have written the psalm, he could not have felt it; he could not have loved God again, for the sense of guilt would have risen as a mountain separating between him and God. It was the assurance of that mountain being levelled before the pardoning mercy of God in Christ, which enabled him to lift his bleeding heart again to his Father, and weep in holy penitence.

Walk, then, confidently with God. Entertain no suspicions of His love. I know the apprehensions which may arise in some tender consciences and anxious hearts. I know the secret alarm which some begin to feel, and the palpitation occasioned by that alarm, as the question suggests itself, 'Is not this to deal

rashly with sin—is it not to countenance transgression?’ Nay, my friends, what is the remedy? I am prepared to feel, with the most anxious among you, the exceeding depth of transgression, and the bitterness which it ought to bring, and does bring, on the believer’s heart; but what is the remedy, I ask again—to the most anxious sinner among you, I say, What is the remedy? My dear brethren, I wish you to see that the remedy lies in confidence in spite of the sin; and there is no other remedy. Strive at reformation! Alas! the more you strive, the more you fail. You cannot touch the sore place; it eludes all your toils, it lies far too deep for your self-imposed penances. Pray and struggle as you will, there lurks the deadly mischief; the shaft is too deep to be extracted by such efforts as yours. Where is the remedy? Compensation! How can you make compensation for sin? I know, that if you have defrauded any man, it is your duty to make compensation; but the sin remains on your conscience still. What can put it away? What can restore the heart? What can give fresh vigour for the service of God? What can cause a real loathing of the way in which you have wandered and soiled your spiritual garments? Nothing, nothing but confidence that God has pardoned you. You will never walk with comfort or happiness, you will never walk with holiness, you will never walk with a consciousness of victory over habitual sins, unless you walk confidently. Oh! then, lay it to your heart this morning, that no matter what you have done, God loves you. What a saying is this! Yet it is not too much; it is exactly what God himself says. God loves sinners; “He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” for it. Oh, lay it to heart, I repeat, that, no matter what you have done, God loves you. This is the way to go home happy. If you realise what I have now said, you will feel more happiness than you have ever felt before, unless you belong to those who have already experienced its blessedness, and you will dismiss all suspicion about His hearkening to your prayers. We are taught by our church this morning, that God is “always more ready to hear than we to pray;” a most faithful saying—He is “always ready to hear;” it is according to His own method, to hear them that call upon Him, and He declares that “every one that asketh receiveth.” And when the hour of trial comes, and you feel that you do not receive, remember that, in fact, you only do not receive in the way that you were expecting to receive. There are many thousand ways in which God may be giving and you receiving. He does not say that “every one that asketh receiveth” in the way that he himself desires. You may be asking for other departments in His service, or for victory over some sin, and He may be answering your prayer in a way which you little think of; He may be answering your prayer by a long season of humiliation, and of apprehension on your part, which shall presently issue in His glory and in your own good. But you must exercise patience; and while you exercise patience, do not admit suspicion, but cultivate an assurance that God is hearkening to prayer, and answering prayer, whether you can see precisely how or not. Is it not written by the faithful One, “Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened?” Is He not true? Does He break His Word? Will you suspect God? You may have already yielded to the subtle deceit that you suspect yourselves. You do, in reality, however, no such thing; it is God whom you suspect when you have unbelief. Dismiss all unworthy suspicions of Him at once; and believe that He does hear and will hear. When a sense of unworthiness to come to Him steals over your heart; when the recollection of having offended Him causes a blush of shame to mantle your cheek, and, as you kneel down to speak to Him, you are ready to say, ‘Oh! how can I dare to come, after having so offended Him?’—remember that it is written of Him that “He upbraideth not.” He is not like a man in that respect. In the best and kindest of human beings there is, alas! more or less of upbraiding, and you feel this when you approach a fellow-creature whom you have offended. But of God it is written, “He giveth liberally and upbraideth not.” This was noticed by one who felt the subject on which I am now speaking, and wrote Christian songs upon it, more than one of which we have often sung. In writing on the history of Manasseh, the king of Israel, and his pardon by the God of Israel, our sweet poet said—

“He did not upbraid him  
With what he had done,  
But instantly made him  
A saint and a son.”

Oh ! then, my dear brethren, dismiss suspicion, and walk in reference to your prayers, as well as in reference to His love, confidently with God.

On another point, I would exhort you to dismiss suspicion ; and that is, in reference to His persevering care over you to the end. Now hearken to the faithful and true One once more : " Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." What words are these from the faithful and true One ! He addresses them as persons placed in circumstances calculated to cause fear, admitting the dangers by which, in their own estimation, they are surrounded. But He says, " Fear not," " fear not, little flock." It is " a little flock ;" a flock of sheep in the midst of wolves, easily terrified ; but, " fear not," says God. And if you look at the language of Jehovah to that nation which stood so long as a type of His church, you will find again and again, reiterated with the utmost tenderness and the most pathetic love, the exhortation, " Fear not ;" " Fear not, thou worm Jacob ; fear not, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, for I am thy God ; I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." So speaks the faithful and true One ; and hearken to the response of a confiding child—" I will not fear what man can do unto Me ;" " the Lord is my light and my salvation ; whom shall I fear ? the Lord is the strength of my life ; of whom shall I be afraid ? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear ; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." " We may boldly say, I will not fear what man shall do unto me." This promise is not made for one particular period of the believer's life, but for every period. It may be pleaded every morning, so as to put away suspicion for that day ; and thus is it a portion of our daily bread, and by means of it we may dispel suspicion of our Father's love morning by morning, and walk in the strength of that food all the day through.

There are other features connected with our walk with God, which I may not attempt to enlarge upon now ; and I am the more sorry for this, because the combination is so important. I have only enlarged upon one feature, which is, that we should walk confidently. Together with this, let me say, it is our privilege to walk obediently, which is very important in the connection. It is also our privilege to walk humbly and to walk patiently with God. These points I must leave. I shall again take up the subject if spared till the evening, when I shall proceed with these other portions of our walk with God. I am not afraid to leave this subject of confidence by itself, although for a full view of scriptural truth there should be a combination of other features with it. But, of itself, it is so blessedly true, and so sanctifying when felt, that I am not afraid, I repeat, to leave it by itself. If any man presume, on the ground of such confidence, to continue in sin, it is only because he does not understand it ; it is because he has never felt it ; it is because he has laid hold of words without feeling their force, and is trying to find an excuse for continuing in sin. Such a man will find, in the Bible itself, abundance of excuses for continuing in sin ; in looking for excuses he will be answered according to his own idols, and fall into the trap that he has laid for himself. But the upright shall walk uprightly, and the children of God shall be delivered. Their sober confidence is their strength. They have a confidence to which others are strangers ; and while " pride goeth before a fall," with the lowly is safety.

Oh ! then, dear brethren, cultivate this walk with God. Keep near to Him by Jesus Christ. Christ is the basis of this nearness ; and I invite you, with all holy confidence, to avail yourselves of that basis. And as you have been taught to regard Jesus Christ as the basis of salvation ; as you are rooted in Him and established in the faith, beware lest by any man's false philosophy, or by the vain deceits and traditions of the world, you are drawn away from the true path. In Christ, remember, " dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ;" and " ye are complete in Him." With these words—as perfect as any which language contains to express any idea—with these words of the Holy Ghost by the apostle, I conclude for the present—" Ye are complete in Him."

## A Second Sermon,

BY THE

REV. HUGH M'NEILE, D.D.

PREACHED IN ST. JUDE'S CHURCH, LIVERPOOL,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, AUGUST 22, 1847.

*"And Enoch walked with God."*—Genesis v. 24.

A QUESTION put by the prophet Amos connects itself closely with our subject. He asks, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Enoch must have had agreement with God, or he could not have walked with Him. The same is true concerning Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, all the prophets, and true believers in all ages, concerning whom it may with propriety be said, that they "walked with God." The disagreement was in and by Adam; the agreement is in and by Christ. All who are in Adam walk "contrary" to God—as He himself expresses it in expostulating with the Jews: "I have walked contrary to you, and you have walked contrary to Me." All who are in Christ are changed from that contrariety, and "walk with God." Unrenewed men cannot walk with Christ, and renewed men cannot walk with Adam; "for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? what communion hath light with darkness? what concord hath Christ with Belial? what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them."

We have already considered the agreement here referred to in the meritorious ground of it, it supplied in the person and work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and in the moral application of it as suitable to man's peculiar condition. I endeavoured to show you briefly this morning what that condition is, and the nature of the agreement bringing the sinner to God; and I then proceeded to give you some directions as to how the restored believer should walk with God. I especially called your attention to the privilege, as well as duty, of walking confidently with God, removing all suspicion with regard to His love for you, with regard to His forgiveness of your sins, His readiness to hear your prayers, and His persevering watchfulness and care over you even to the end; and I promised to give you further directions this evening in reference to this walk with God.

And, first, walk obediently with God; in other words, be diligent in keeping His commandments.

This is the plain call of the Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples, both those who were originally around Him and those who were to follow in all ages: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." This is the plain practical appeal which is to be made to men who complain concerning their religious feelings. When, under some of the circumstances which we imagined this morning, men complain of a want of confidence in God, a want of enjoyment in religion, of interest in prayer; when they complain of the darkness and desolation which belong to a state of backsliding from God, and when they secretly desire to have all the attempts at remedy which are applied to them applied only to their feelings, that they may recover a comfortable state of mind, we must not forget, in the mean time, their practice; and it is one of the wisest courses to adopt with a man so situated, to call attention to his daily conduct. Is there no plain and obvious duty neglected? Is there no commandment practically slighted? Is there a vigorous discharge of all that is known to be right? He will not say so; but persons so situated excuse themselves, or endeavour to excuse themselves, by pleading the state of their feelings. They have no heart for spiritual occupations. They have given over the attempt to pray, because they have not been able to enjoy it when they have made it; they have given over the attempt to read their Bible, because when



they have opened the sacred page they have not been able to enjoy the perusal. Now what would you say to a school-boy who attempted to excuse himself for not getting his lessons, by saying he was in a bad humour for his books? If the bad humour were allowed as an excuse for his not getting his lessons, that bad humour would increase upon him, and he would keep up his idleness as an excuse for not learning. Thus, there are many pleading their uncomfortable state of mind, in reference to their Christian experience, as an excuse for a dereliction of plain, practical duty; and the consequence is, that that state of mind grows upon them; that which seems to them to be an excuse for their dislike to plain, self-denying duty, grows and is perpetuated. Now, my brethren, one of the things connected with our duty of walking continually with God is this, that under such a state of mind we should not allow bad humour to be pleaded as an excuse for neglecting duty; in other words, we should not allow want of enjoyment in obedience to keep us from obedience itself. Say that there are two things connected with a spiritual duty, the outward act and the inward enjoyment. Well, the enjoyment is gone; you lack something which is requisite for enjoyment; your views are dark; your circumstances have become so disturbed, so perplexed, either in the business or in the family, that you are not happy in the outward act. But is that any reason why the outward act itself should be given over? You cannot enjoy the service of God as you once did; you cannot enjoy public prayer as you did formerly: is that any reason why you should absent yourself from the house of prayer? Is there some infirmity upon you, so that you cannot maintain attention during the time of prayer; and will you make that an excuse for not attending to prayer at all? This is precisely what I wish to bring before you; this is the real practical turning point of your walking obediently with God. Go as far as you can. If you cannot have the enjoyment, nevertheless do the act; if you cannot have your heart in it, at least put your hand to it; if you cannot have the precious delight of reading with emotion, you may still have the precious consciousness of reading with earnestness and determination. Open your Bible and read it; expand your soul. Cleave to the duty; walk obediently; and keep God's commandments as far as you can. Oh! do not allow the want of enjoyment in the duty to be pleaded by a treacherous heart as an excuse for non-performance.

Now in this matter of obedience in walking with God there are three characteristics which belong of right to true Christian obedience. It will, in the first place, be unreserved, without any fear of excess. Obedience to God cannot be carried too far. There are many persons who complain of excess in religion, but if religion be of the right kind it cannot be excessive. What is the first great commandment? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." How much,—how well,—how earnestly? "With all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Can we do more than "all?" Where, then, is excess possible? There ought to be fervour about our service of God. We ought not to take it quietly. Shall every idol to be found in the affairs and amusements, occupations and possessions of this world have its enthusiastic servants, and shall the living God have only cold half-hearted service? Shall enthusiasm in every other department be held praiseworthy, and enthusiasm in the service of God be condemned? We have enthusiasts in every department of literature, and they all seem to take pleasure and even to glory in their enthusiasm. There are enthusiasts in astronomical studies, enthusiasts in botany, enthusiasts in chemistry, enthusiasts in practical science—in short, the world is full of enthusiasts, early and late devoting all their powers, and drawing all their reading, in one direction; and, instead of being ashamed to avow it, if they are asked why they so spend their time, they magnify their idol; they say, 'Oh, it is such a glorious study, it is such a noble pursuit,—a study, a pursuit, deserving the whole time and energies of those who engage in it.' They are not ashamed to say whom or what they serve, and society applauds them; in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred enthusiasts in the things of this world are considered praiseworthy. How strange then, is it, what a fatality must have befallen the Christian world, when the only enthusiasm which is described as bigotry, is that which is connected with the service of God! Let there be no lack of genuine earnestness in your obedience to God! Cultivate such a love for Him as shall extend itself over everything connected with Him, with His service, with His truth, with His name, and with His honour in the world. You can perceive the effect of love towards

- a fellow-creature, when his character and his good name in society are tampered with. Do you love any one, and will you sit quietly to hear him slandered? Why even the heathen could see how base this were. Even a heathen poet, in denouncing it, could tell his readers to look upon the man who would hear an absent friend blamed, or attacked, without defending him, as a vile, a black, a hideous, and a revolting character, requiring to be shunned by all.

\* \* \* "Absentem qui rodit amicum;  
 Qui non defendit, alio culpante; \* \* \*  
 \* \* \* hic niger est: hunc tu, Romane, caveto."

So said the old Roman poet, and we feel the truth of what he said. What sort of friend is that who will hear his friend slandered and not take his part? and what sort of love to Christ can you have if you will hear Him slandered and not take His part? If you can hear the doctrines of His glorious Gospel misrepresented; if you can hear truth and falsehood mingled together, while the awful assertion is advanced, that we cannot tell which is which, what sort of love can you have to Him if you do not boldly venture, at the risk of being laughed at, to declare whose you are and whom you serve? Oh, walk obediently with God, by loving Him and keeping His commandments, and forwarding His truth and His honour. There is a strange lack of this manifestation of love for the Lord among professing Christians; there is a strange extension of liberality amongst men who profess to love the Gospel—a liberality, which leads them to say, 'Oh! we must not interfere with the opinions of others, we must not even venture to say that we have got the truth.' Have you, then, no confidence in the truth, or do you think that we see and know nothing of it?

I will suppose that you are walking confidently with God; and now I ask you to walk obediently with God. And let your obedience be an unreserved, warm-hearted, zealous, faithful obedience, an obedience of love which is ready at all times, as love is ready;—for love is jealous of opportunities; true love is always ready to take the part of the person beloved,—his name, his fame, and everything connected with him, is dear to those that love him.

Walk, then, unreservedly, in the love of the Lord with all its glorious consequences. And walk obediently with God in the second commandment as well as the first. The second commandment has reference to our neighbours. Now here I shall find less difficulty in urging unreserved and zealous obedience. Who advocates moderation in honesty? Who advocates moderation in truth? What is moderation in truth? It is a palliation of some falsehood. What is moderation in honesty? A palliation of some little dishonesty. No one advocates this. What is moderation in religion,—moderation in obedience? A palliation of some irreligion and some disobedience. Many advocate this. Moderation in religion! Shame, shame on those who use such language. "Moderation in honesty," says the thief. Moderation in honesty is all the thief wants. He does not want to be always dishonest, only sometimes when it suits him. Moderation in truth is what the liar wants; he does not want always to tell lies, only when it suits him. 'Moderation in truth,' then, is the liar's phrase, 'moderation in honesty' is the thief's; and what is it to be moderate in religion, except to show that we do not love the Lord? Again, I say, shame on such language. Oh! my friends, let us know nothing about moderation in religion. We ought to be moderate about everything else, and to "let our moderation be known unto all men," for the end of time is near at hand. In religion "whatever your hand findeth to do, do it with all your might, for there is no device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither you are hastening." Now is the time.

By means of this contrast between the method in which men treat the second commandment, and that in which they treat the first, you see the ungodliness of society. Why do they not relish moderation in honesty? Because dishonesty would injure their property. And why do they relish moderation in religion? Because they do not care one farthing for God's honour or God's truth; that is the real secret. But walk ye obediently with God, unreservedly, without fear of excess. Only see that your religion is of the right kind, and there cannot be excess in it. There cannot be too much love of God; there cannot be too much honesty; there cannot be too much truth. No man is too true, no man is too honest, and no man has too much love to God. Let these things be in you and abound; and let this be one character-

istic of your obedience, that it is unreserved, without fear of excess. So walk with God.

Another characteristic of Christian obedience is, that it is universal, extending to all the commandments of God. There is scarcely any man but would find it easy to keep some of the commandments. No man is tempted to sin in every direction or in every particular. Some men have no constitutional temperament for certain sins, or their position in society frees them from liability to commit them. I may be speaking, for example, to some man at this moment who has no tendency to dishonesty. His situation in society, his easy circumstances, his natural disposition, his uprightness of principle, his long drill in habits of integrity in business, together with his acquired Christian principles and feelings, all work together to the same end; he has not the slightest temptation, it may be, towards dishonesty, and if I were to utter an exhortation against it here, such a man would feel that it did not belong to him, as he had no leaning that way. But, then, that very man may have a strong leaning some other way, which is equally wrong and equally opposed to some other commandment. The very man who is regular and punctual and honourable in his business may have an itching for slander; he may be a man who gives a loose to his tongue in conversation and takes away his neighbour's reputation recklessly. As I said before, no man is liable to be strongly tempted to sin in every direction. Now the risk is, my friends, that such persons will make obedience to those commandments which are congenial to them, an obedience which costs them little or nothing—a sort of compensation or set-off for disobedience to others, and that they will satisfy themselves in their own minds when they transgress by saying, 'Well, it is only this one, and all the others, or most of them, are kept; no one is perfect, every one fails somewhere.' In this way the darling sin may be fostered; the constitutional tendency, through which the power of Christian character leaks away, may be encouraged; and the soft unction may be laid to the soul, that all is safe, because other commandments are not broken. Take heed of this; beware, I entreat you; for all the commandments rest on the same authority, and He who said, "Thou shalt not kill," said also, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and He who said, "Thou shalt not bear false witness," said also, "Thou shalt not covet." If, then, thou bear no false witness, yet covet, where is real deference to the authority of God? Many are deterred from sinning by the fear of exposure amongst men, who are not deterred by any regard for the authority of God. In this way, the opinion of society, the fear of public censure, the dread of losing caste and standing among men—that peace and comfort which belongs to respect amongst our fellows—stops the flood of ungodliness in many cases in which it would otherwise rush on unimpeded in its course. For this we have reason to be very thankful, as far as this world is concerned; but public opinion, with its attendant circumstances, is a very great snare, and deference to it is by thousands mistaken for religion. Multitudes are kept within the bounds of obedience by reference to the tyrant opinion, who pay no regard whatever to the authority of God. Now, my dear Christian brethren, it is your privilege to be obedient, with reference to God's authority itself; it is your privilege to look through and beyond the opinion of men and the demands of society, and to consider that you are serving, not men, but God. It is very true that while you are serving Him, you will secure these other things; it is very true that He has thrown all these other things into the scale over and above the privileges connected with His service; it is very true that a man cannot serve God aright without securing all that is valuable, whatever may be said by cavilling objectors, with regard to respect, real respect, in society. But still it is your privilege—and I exhort you to think of this when walking with God—to realise His authority in what you are doing, observing His law in what you refrain from, rather than keeping on the verge of safety for yourselves in society. Let this principle be extended to every commandment. I know, indeed, that I exhort you to follow a high standard. But have I not reason? Have I not shown you cause for this? Has not the Lord Jesus Christ raised you upon a high platform? Has He not raised you from the dead in Himself, and is it not as persons who are alive from the dead that you are called upon to yield your members as instruments of righteousness unto God? I do not ask men to fly without wings; I do not ask them to walk with God without grace. I am speaking to them that are in Christ Jesus; I am speaking to them who

delight to hear of the glorious work of the Saviour, and who took an interest in my words this morning, when I exhorted them to walk confidently with God. Speaking to such, I ask you, my brethren, to deal fairly and honestly with yourselves, and not to allow the ensnaring subtleties of your own deceitful hearts to keep you back from the performance of plain, obvious duties. Be diligent, manly, steadfast, in the discharge of what you know to be duty : depend upon it that that is one of the best methods, and God will honour it as such, of obtaining healthful spiritual good. In the meantime, however, be diligent in duty. Set your hand to the work in every direction, and especially with reference to the sin by which you are most subtly assailed. You have more need to be zealous there, than with respect to other things which do not constitute your special temptations. Where you find the enemy strongest, there especially give steadfast resistance. Remember that the Christian life, like the natural, is liable to injury at every point. If one single artery in the human body be opened, it will lead to death as certainly, though not so instantaneously, as if all the arteries had been opened. In like manner, one indulged iniquity will sap the foundations of Christian integrity in everything, and raise such a storm in the conscience, as will hinder you from holding communion with God. Be diligent, then, and in unreserved and universal submission, walk obediently with God.

One characteristic more I must give you of Christian obedience, and that is, that it is persevering ; not content with occasional efforts, but abiding. Now this is difficult. You have two enemies to contend against in maintaining a persevering obedience, one a common and constant enemy, the other an occasional one. The first is monotony ; the daily round of plain, uninteresting duty, the daily tread in the same step, over and over again. I said tread ; for the life of almost every man is like a treadmill. He walks his round—he must do it again ; he walks in his path of business—he must go there again ; he engages in his letter writing or correspondence, whatever may be its nature—he must do so again ; he goes to his shop, or his counting house—he must visit it again ; round and round, day after day the same duty to be performed, the plodding work of every day alike. Now there is a want of variety about this, a want of excitement ; and the best test of a man's principles lies in the steadfastness with which he perseveres in despite of this monotony, finding an interest in the occupation through the high principle on which he obeys. The interest which keeps most men in this round of duty, is pecuniary, the absolute necessities of the family—their own necessities. They must do a certain work or they cannot get a living ; they must be back, morning after morning on the tread, or matters will go wrong ; they must be in their shop or they will offend their customers. The interest which induces them to go this round so readily is that of money—an interest in the necessities of life. Here, again, it is your privilege to rise higher. I know well that if you serve God He will add all these things unto you ; I know that if you “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” all the necessities of life will be secured to you and your families. But this should not be your motive as Christians. It is your privilege to know that, while serving God, you will get these, as it were, into the bargain. You are to rise higher than this in a persevering obedience ; and while you go out in the morning as other men, and work at your business like other men, so far as the outward man is concerned, it is your privilege as Christians, engaged in the service of the Lord, to realise a motive at the mention of which the man of the world would laugh, saying, “ Ah ! it is all very well to tell us about your motives ; but your real motive is to provide for yourselves and your families.” The worldly man cannot judge of what is going on within, he can only see the outward act. But it is, in fact, your privilege to have a higher motive, giving to your conduct a better tone and character, than that of the worldly man. You realise God's appointment in placing you in that very business ; you see that His providence has put you there, and you thank Him for the health of body and mind by which you are enabled to follow your daily drudgery ; and, giving God thanks for the power which you possess to carry on your work, in the midst of it, and morning by morning, as you go to it, you are walking with God. Your little ejaculatory prayers, your little thanksgivings every hour, tell Him that you bless Him for what you are about and that it is all of His appointment. Looking up from the table where your letters lie, you give God thanks that you have mind and opportunity for what you are en-

gaged in ; you have intercourse with heaven in the very midst of the drudgeries of earth ; and thus your obedience to God is marked by perseverance. Let this, then, be your privilege, my dear friends. It is only in this way that practical religion becomes a practicable thing. And it is a practicable thing. It does not, and it ought not to withdraw a man from his business. In order to hold communion with God, there is no need that you should leave your shop or your counting house ; there is no occasion for you to shut yourselves up from your family and your servants. In order to hold communion with God, and to "walk" with Him, it is only needful that you should realise His presence and authority, whether in the counting house, the shop, the family, or the schoolroom, as the Master of all, everywhere "God over all blessed for ever."

Oh ! then, let your walk with God be obedient ; unreserved, without fear of excess ; universal, without exception or partiality ; and persevering, without yielding to monotony.

The second evil which I referred to, as one which you will sometimes have to contend against, is disappointment. Disappointment is disheartening. When a man feels that he has really been serving God ; that he has been sincerely seeking a blessing morning by morning upon his work, and has been honestly discharging the duties of his calling, and yet some disaster has come upon him, and the business has not prospered, so that there seems to be a blight somewhere, he feels disappointed, his hands hang down, and he is not able to take the position that he once fondly hoped he might take. Under such circumstances, the man feels that his trouble is difficult to bear, and he requires within the strength and power of upholding grace. Oh ! let your diligence to persevering, even against disappointment. Go on. The case seems hard indeed ; that I grant ; but still the work must be done, the duty performed. What else can you do ? The alternative is worse ; to give way is to make matters worse and worse ; to despond is to put a weapon into the enemy's hand. Persevere, persevere against monotony and against disappointment. It is no slight task, I grant, but it is a task for a man in whom the Spirit of God is.

Another characteristic of our walk with God should be humility. "Walk humbly with your God." Nearly all the relationships of life in which there exists subordination, authority of various kinds exercised and submitted to, are made use of in Scripture, to represent our relationships to God. He is a Master, and we are servants. What does that relationship call for but diligence in the discharge of known duties ? He describes Himself as the Husband, and His church as the wife. What does that relationship call for ? Subordination in love, indeed, but still subordination ; for "the husband is the head of the wife." He is a Father, and we are children. What does that relationship call for ? Reverence—filial reverence it is true, but still reverence, or honour,—the honour of the father and the mother. "If I be a Father," He says, "where is My honour ? and if I be a Master where is My fear ?" Further, He is the Creator, and we are the creatures of His hands ; and this relationship calls for real subjection and prostration. So, then, although our walk with God, on being raised into happy union with Him in Christ, is to be a confiding, joyful, happy walk, yet is it to be a reverent, humble, diligent, honouring and submissive walk ; we are not to forget our relative position even when permitted to enjoy His gracious presence. This relationship will, be it remembered, last for ever ; He will always be Master, Husband, Father, Creator ; and in the subordination of this relationship, we shall to all eternity veil our faces with our wings as the angels do, while we praise our God. This is a humility inseparable from our highest enjoyments. When we feel most delivered from every infirmity we shall also feel the humblest ; and if we could wing our flight now from every remnant of sin and pain, sickness, infirmity, and sorrow, nor cease that flight till we reached the throng on the "sea of glass, clear as crystal," before the Redeemer's throne, there would we join that throng in all humility, veiling the face which should enjoy the brightness of "Him that sitteth upon the throne, and of the Lamb for ever." Walk humbly with God. Look at Him on the throne, and yourself in the dust ; it is from the prostration of such a view that you will arise strengthened to discharge your duty. It is when in the dust you feel that you can do nothing, that you arise to "do all things through Christ that strengtheneth you ;" it is when you have "no confidence in the flesh," that you have all confidence in the Lord.

I shall not enlarge on this now, but invite you to meditate upon it by yourselves. In the midst of your confidence in Christ, and of strenuous endeavours to obey God's commandments, in the day of your highest success, remember

what you are, and what He is, and "walk humbly with your God." There is no abject fear in this humility ; there is no terror of an angry judge ; love has cast out such fear, such terror as this ; but there is a deep impression of what is suitable to the different relationships that exist between us. There is, if I might so express it, there is a Christian tact in the true believer—a tact like that which characterises the society of this world, in which those who are acquainted with it perceive, by a sort of instinct, the relative positions which ought to be occupied by its various members. In that class, the highest class of society in this world, where all the etiquettes of rank are observed, and where tact and tact alone can instantaneously observe and act upon them, this is cultivated to such a nicety, that delicate as such things are, and intermingling as they are in a throng of nobles, there is rarely a violation of tact : rarely ; it is a most unheard-of thing—all goes on harmoniously, because every one feels the relative position which he occupies. This is transferable to a higher court. There is a tact in Christian enjoyment of God which never loses sight of its place, never intrudes, never violates the etiquettes of heaven ; which is never rude, rough, careless or thoughtless of delicacy, in the presence of the great King. Walk humbly with God.

One characteristic more and I have done. You must walk patiently with God. For however confiding your walk may be ; however obedient with all the great characteristics of obedience, however humble, still you will suffer, and must be prepared for endurance. "The Lord chastens every son whom He receiveth ;" and you must not expect to walk through this world exempt from trouble. "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened unto you." It is not a strange thing, it is the common case of the Lord's children. We are to count it all joy to be exercised with many trials. The trial of faith "worketh patience," but "let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." At times you will be called to feel the Lord's rod ; and it becomes you, instead of rebelling, or writhing under it, or rejecting the stroke, to "kiss the rod." Accept the trouble, whatever it may be, as a thing which in your case is well deserved and wisely ministered, as a messenger from Him who knows you best, and has the greatest anxiety for your best welfare. Recognise the call for patience, whatever it may be, which keeps you waiting, as God's fiery discipline. You might, perhaps, expect, if you were united more to Christ in holy confidence, if you were walking with Him in unreserved and holy obedience, if you were humble before God, and walking in all respects according to the Scripture rule, you might expect, I say, that all would be joy and light and peace. But not so. When the disciples went on board the vessel with Jesus, at His command, everything seemed serene, but they were scarcely adrift when a storm came on. This was designed for their instruction ; it was designed to make them feel, more and more their dependence on Him. Had the voyage been all calm and serene, they would have had no occasion to cry, "Lord save or we perish." But what a cry that was—the very cry to which you also must be brought ! In order to bring you to it, there must be a storm ; for we do not cry out thus in fair weather. Accept the trouble, then, when it comes as God's message of discipline and love, and walk patiently with God.

Now, my dear friends, bestir yourselves at all times, and give your best energies to this work. The prophet of old asked—"If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil ? and if ye offer the lame and sick is it not evil ? offer it now unto the governor ; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person ? saith the Lord of hosts." The meaning of this is, that there were certain parties in those days who wished to serve God with the refuse of the flock. They had in the flock good males, such as were suitable to bring to the altar ; but these were too expensive, these would do for the market ; and they therefore put lame animals on the altars, as being less expensive. Now do not give the male of the flock to your counting-house or your shop and put God off with a lame or a sick one in the evening. Give Him the best you have, and it will never damage your store. Give Him the best hour in the day, whatever hour it may be. It varies with different men ; some have the best hour at night, others in the morning ; but whatever may be the best hour give it to Him, He well deserves it. All your hours are His. Give Him the male of the flock ; serve Him truly with all your heart. "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

NOTES OF LECTURES  
ON  
PROPERTY AND PAUPERISM.  
DELIVERED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
BY THE  
REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.

LECTURE VIII.

No man likes poverty; but many like the temptations which lie scattered along the road to it. Present enjoyment will make a father disregard all the miseries he may bring on his family. How much will he be urged on in this reckless course, if he knows that the country will provide for his family; and that there will be for them the shade and shelter of a poor's house! When charities are thus paraded before his eyes, they tempt him from sobriety. You do all that in you lies to bring him to poverty; and when you have relieved all the clamorous applicants, you find many whose voice was drowned by the former, and as much private relief is required as ever. We have heard the shout of execration raised against the best friends of humanity, because they added judgment to compassion! We shall not now argue the matter on the ground of Political Economy; but, believing our views to be enforced in Scripture, we shall lay before you what it says on that large system of charity, which was instituted in the days of the apostles.

The increase of the Christian faith excited the hostility of its opponents; and, though they did not absolutely lay hands on the property of its converts, the shops of the latter were neglected, and if servants they were discarded. But these converts had one resource: men who had property could dispose of it, and put the proceeds into a common stock for the poor. This peculiar remedy was adopted, to meet peculiar exigencies. A noble enthusiasm actuated the whole. It seems, the apostles were intrusted with the distribution of this fund. No doubt it was a good work: many were relieved, and comfort was scattered among numerous families; yet had the apostles the hardihood to propose, that the arrangement should be done away. They proposed, that they should be the ministers of the meat which was incorruptible and eternal; while other matters should be committed to other men;—that they should distribute the “meat which endureth unto everlasting life;” others, “the meat, which perisheth.” (John vi. 27.) Perhaps they said—“Let us keep exclusively to our own work! Our business is with minds and principles; and, if we let other things alone, we shall see many sons and daughters turned unto righteousness; and they will do as much as others have done. We will not do *ourselves*; but we will multiply the *doers*. The necessitous will not meet with us, but with hundreds in our room, and by our means.” It would be preposterous to hurry the makers of steam-engines into the working of looms; but not more so than to burden ministers with secular employments. There is great mischief in making them men “of all work.” One elaborate sermon on the Sabbath, would be a greater contribution from a clergyman to the good of his parish, than his whole time spent in Societies, which have had the effect of diluting pulpit-preparation, to an extent which is quite deplorable. It is Satan transforming himself “into an angel of light.” (2 Corinthians xi. 14.) It is a very good work; but, instead of doing it yourselves, it is *your* business to multiply the *doers*.\*

The apostles said:—“It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables.” (Acts vi. 2.) They seem to have been impressed

\* Addressed to the Divinity Students, who formed the great majority of his audience.

with the superior worth of eternity. The number of the disciples was about five thousand (Acts iv. 4); and that of the apostles twelve; and yet the poor of that little flock were too great a burden. We now lose sight of them. Probably the fund became exhausted; and those who before needed nothing came to great distress. Paul set on foot a subscription for the poor saints at Jerusalem.\* It is not a violent supposition, that the prospect of eternity made the early Christians less attached to the things of the present life; and probably something like a common stock was formed by the wealthy. This can be proved by some passages, and explains others. Though distress was the general lot, a temptation was held out to some to be idle, that they might be supported by the common fund; and received into the houses of others. We are at no loss to understand why Paul should say—"If any provide not for his own, he is worse than an infidel." (1 Timothy v. 8.) Better that he should have remained a pagan, as he was, than that he should have come forward to profess Christianity from a motive so sordid! He who burdens the church with his family, is lower than those who keep out of its pale. "If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them; and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed." (1 Timothy v. 16.) Those who "would not work," were not to "eat." For "some" walked "disorderly—working not at all." But they were to "work, and eat their own bread"—not that of the church. (2 Thessalonians iii. 10—12.)

Again: the fund maintained the teachers, as well as the poor; and thus abuses crept in;—men aspiring to be teachers, for the sake of the maintenance which the office brought with it. This explains the passages about "men of corrupt minds, supposing that gain is godliness" (1 Timothy vi. 5);—"grievous wolves, not sparing the flock" (Acts xx. 29)—creeping "into houses" (2 Timothy iii. 6);—"filthy lucre" (1 Timothy iii. 3, 8; Titus i. 7, 11; 1 Peter v. 2);—"making "merchandise of you" (2 Peter ii. 3);—"running greedily after the error of Balaam for reward" (Jude 11);—"having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 16), &c. How great an importance St. Paul attaches to a circumstance apparently trifling!—his refusal to accept the maintenance to which he had always asserted a right, but from which in certain cases he abstained.† He looked to the consequences. He saw how the practice might be abused; and so he worked with his own hands, rather than be burdensome‡. He had rival teachers, who preached "another Jesus" (2 Cor. xi. 4); and asserted that they did not labour for reward; and so Paul insists on his own purity of motives: otherwise his doing so would have looked like vain ostentation:—"Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also!—I have preached to you the Gospel of God freely!—When I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man! In all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself—that I may cut off all occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we." (2 Cor. xi. 18, 7, 9, 12.) "I have coveted no man's silver or gold, or apparel: these hands have ministered to my necessities." (Acts xx. 33, 34.)

But, in the Acts and Epistles, we meet with various traces of abuses, by persons living idle on this fund, and on private relief. It caused such a relaxation of industry, as to call forth the indignant rebukes of the apostle. He forebore the assertion of a right which belonged to him, that he might set an example of forbearance, and exalt the feelings and principles of the poor; and so he on whom devolved "the care of all the churches" (2 Corinthians xi. 28), became a common workman, and set himself down to the occupation of a tent-maker. We are not left in doubt as to his motives; for he tells us, that he "wrought

\* "A certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem." (Romans xv. 26.)  
 "The collection for the saints." (1 Corinthians xvi. 1.)

† "Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have not we power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare, any time, at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel. Nevertheless, we have not used this power." (1 Corinthians ix. 4, 6, 7, 12, and 14.)

‡ "Even unto this present hour we labour, working with our own hands." (1 Corinthians iv. 11, 12.) "I will not be burdensome to you; for I seek not yours, but you." (2 Corinthians xii. 14.) "Labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you." (1 Thessalonians ii. 9.)



with labour and travail night and day, that" he "might not be chargeable to any." (2 Thessalonians iii. 8.) Couple this with the conduct of the apostles at first. The people they had to do with, did not exceed (in number) the population in many of our parishes. Compare their engagements with those of Paul, and you would think he had less time to spare than any of them; but though *they* grudged the time devoted to serving tables, *he* did not grudge the time necessary to set an example of independence to the poor;—to elevate their principles; and to lift them from the necessity of relying on the resources of others. Apart from Political Economy altogether, and on the testimony of Scripture, we see whether it was in the actual distribution of relief, or in the implanting of a proper pride, that the apostles thought they had their best employment.

A requirement lies on all, to relieve all who require it; but the minister is not to give his time to any Society. There are two ways of doing the work;—to relieve them when poor, and to prevent their becoming so. The apostles took the *first* way, for a time; but gave it up: St. Paul took the *second*; and a minister may still take the same. The time given to helping on a public charity, might be spent in cottages, and in instilling such principles as would root out sordid ones from the minds of the people. This he may do by his prayers, and his affectionate entreaties; and, though he may have nothing in his hand, yet, "out of the good treasure of his heart" (Matthew xii. 35), he may instil principles which will do more good, even as regards their temporal interests, than all the paraded charities of the land. It is grievous that the order pointed out by the apostles, should be so miserably reversed, and that a minister should be placed at the wrong end—at the place which the Bible and Political Economy point out as not right to be occupied. His utility there is questionable; and, in my humble opinion, he aggravates the mischief he is set up to remove. In Glasgow there was a controversy, which quite settled *me*, and in which Doctors of Divinity were enlisted on both sides, as to whether the broth of the Town Hospital should be made of pork, or of cows' heads!\*

It is a duty you have to impress on your people, that they should "work" with their "own hands," rather than "be burdensome." (1 Thessalonians iv. 11, and 2 Corinthians xii. 14.) Every Christian principle should be summoned up to struggle with the difficulties of their situation. This you will enforce at a great disadvantage in parishes where the Poor Laws are already established: hence we think that, before any extensive impression can be made, they must be done away. Would that annihilate poverty? No! We should always have it, either from necessity or accident. The blind, the lame, and the crippled would always knock at our hearts, and would see if our principles were right within us.

I think it a wholesome thing to continue the weekly collections for the poor at the church-door; as it keeps up the margin which surrounds Pauperism, and widens the moral distance between the giver and the receiver. But how much more adequate to the claims on it is the sum made by those who provide for their own families, that would otherwise have been "burdensome." The immediate giver of charity carries off the *eclat*; but those engaged in this "labour of love" will not be forgotten. (Hebrews vi. 10.) They are "poor;" but they make "many rich." (2 Corinthians vi. 10.) They struggle against receiving relief themselves, that it may be poured on others in greater abundance; and though they have not a farthing to bestow, they have a share in all the charities of the land!†

\* "The Present State and Future Prospects of Pauperism in Glasgow," occupy Chapter 12 in the "Christian and Civic Economy" (Volume 2, Page 137), and in the "Christian and Economic Polity," Volume 2, (Dr. Chalmers's Works, Volume 15,) Page 52. Speaking of his being mixed up with extra-ministerial business there, and the severe tax on his time even in attaching his name to official documents, Dr. C. observed (in another Lecture)—"I have a frightful recollection of seventy signatures in one day!"

† In the foregoing Lecture, Pauperism is contemplated in its theological aspect; which is also considered, though in a different light, in Chapters 9 and 10 of the Lecturer's "Christian and Civic Economy" (Volume 2, Pages 1 to 88); having for their subjects the "Relation that subsists between the Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns," and the "Bearing which a Right Christian Economy has upon Pauperism." See Volume 14 of Dr. Chalmers's Works (Christian and Economic Polity, Volume 1,) Pages 351 to 431.

## THE DUTY OF NATIONAL THANKSGIVING.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

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PREACHED IN ST. JAMES'S CHAPEL, CLAPHAM,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 29, 1847.

*"They are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful."*—Romans i. 20, 21.

How fearful an evil is sin! Its nature precludes all apology for it. It has no excuse. And yet how deceitful is it! It invents apologies without number for itself in all its forms. All men are sinners, but all men "with one consent make excuse." Apt scholars of the first apologist! "The woman whom *Thou* gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat," is an excuse which shows "the exceeding sinfulness of sin." Adam and his fallen race, rather than condemn themselves on account of transgression, will venture to charge the Holy One with the occasion of it. But the bare fact that sin cannot find excuse, save in making Jehovah the author of evil, proves of itself that it is "without excuse."

Many lines of scriptural argument might be adduced to show the inexcusableness of sin. But we know of none more clear, more comprehensive, or more unanswerable, than that which the text supplies. Here we have man's *impiety* and man's *ingratitude*, leaving him without excuse. The apostle's argument is applied to the state of the heathen only, but as we proceed we shall endeavour to show that it is of universal application: and that of all sinners, whether angelic or human, it is true, that "they are without excuse, because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful."

I. This is the case with the *first sinner*—*Satan*—the father of sin, and sinners. What was the exact nature of the sin by which he "fell from his first estate," we know not. It has been a subject of much controversy. Whether the announcement in heaven that He who is Jehovah's Fellow was about to become a little lower than the angels, and that though lower He would still remain their Lord and their God—whether the anticipated command from the supreme throne, "Let all the angels of God worship Him," gave rise to the first outbreak of pride and consequent rebellion among the angelic hosts, we know not. But whatever was the *occasion* of Satan's sin, the text gives a clue as to its *nature*, and we cannot be wrong in affirming that he and his angels "are without excuse, because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful."

"The first estate" of the fallen angels was doubtless one of extensive knowledge. In their present condition what wisdom, what craft, what subtlety do they display! We have but little idea of the vast capabilities of the intellects of spirits. We know of no possible limit to the graspings of their comprehensions, but that of the incomprehensible Deity. And yet angels were made to

live even in His unveiled presence—to know Him, to love, serve, and glorify Him. Created holy, their holiness was derived from Him. Created happy, their bliss centered in Him. Created wise, their wisdom consisted in knowing Him. But from some unrevealed cause, their knowledge did not beget humility, their surprising privileges did not ensure gratitude; whilst standing before “the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity,” they were “lifted up with pride,” and rebelled against Him. And God, who created them and had blessed them, spared them not, “but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;” and “they are without excuse; because that when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful.”

II. The same truth applies to *our first parents*. Their nature was one degree lower than that of the angels: but not less perfect, and scarcely less glorious. They were created after the image of God in holiness and happiness. Their intellects uncrippled by sin, far surpassed those of the highest order of fallen man, which now call forth our admiration and wonder. What bounds could have been fixed to that mind which held daily converse with the eternal God? A wiser and greater than Solomon was placed in the garden of Eden. Adam had no need of lifting nature's veil to know nature's God; when the Lord God himself was wont to “walk in the garden.”

What privileges were there! In the bowers of a sinless paradise what unspeakable bliss! The body and soul united in blissful harmony, and both united to the God of love! There dwelt “the peace of God which passeth all understanding.” The overflowing tide of the happiness of heaven rolled its gladdening waters over the blooming Eden. To “dress and to keep” the garden was not labour. To hold continuous communion with God was not effort. The will of God was then “done on earth, as it is done in heaven.” Sinless Eden mirrored the holiness and happiness of the realms of glory.

But notwithstanding, *impiety and ingratitude* were the sin and ruin of Adam! He knew God and yet he believed Him not! He credited the word of “the father of lies” before the word of the God of truth. Ambition made him forget his privileges. To be wiser than their Maker—to be independent of “Him in whom they lived and moved and had their being”—“to be as gods, knowing good and evil”—was a temptation artfully adapted to insinuate itself into ungrateful hearts. Oh! mysterious entrance of sin into sinless souls! What fearful and rapid progress in sin did our first parents make! The impiety and ingratitude of hell found a counterpart in once holy bosoms! And “they were without excuse, because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful.”

III. We would not pass over unnoticed the apostle's argument respecting the *state of the heathen*. Many persons will scarcely admit that the train of reasoning which we have pursued can be applied to them. Where is the proof that they have any knowledge of the true God? and if they know Him not, how can we charge them with the sin of ingratitude to Him? In answer to all such objections it is sufficient to refer to the apostle's argument. He proves that though the heathen are ignorant of the revelation of *grace*, (and they will not be condemned for rejecting that which was never offered to them,) yet they cannot be ignorant of the revelation of *nature*. “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen,

being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." It is clear, then, that the true God might be known through the light of nature, and would be known through that medium alone, if sin had not destroyed in man's soul the love of truth, and the desire for holiness. The present awful and ruinous state of the heathen has arisen from the depravity of human nature; the love of sin, and consequent hatred of holiness. "Even as they *did not like* to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind." They abused their privileges, were ungrateful for the light which they possessed—"loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil," "and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things,"—"so that they are without excuse, because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful."

IV. *The fall of the Jews* is another painful illustration of our subject. What nation was ever so blessed as they! Their rise and progress were supernatural. Their history is a record of miracles. Their existence, an imperishable monument of Divine sovereignty. Raised from obscurity to the dignity of a Theocracy, they passed on from one degree of glory to another, till the Lord of glory appeared as "the King of the Jews." The pen of inspiration has summed up their privileges in the words of St. Paul—"To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came; who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen." And when we reflect upon the past history of their unparalleled greatness, we may well appeal to them, and to the whole universe through them, in the words of their own inspired lawgiver, "Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or hath God essayed to go and take Him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? Unto thee it was showed, that thou mightest know that the Lord He is God; there is none else beside Him."

And notwithstanding all this, *impiety and ingratitude* were the sin and the ruin of Israel! They lightly esteemed the food from heaven, and the condescending reign of the King of heaven. Their ingratitude taught them to long for the flesh-pots of Egypt, and desire a man for their sovereign, when God himself was their King. Their gross impiety burst forth whilst they stood professedly waiting upon the Lord. The golden calf of Aaron was preferred before the invisible presence of Jehovah. Idolatry was their besetting sin—it assumed various forms, it increased, it waxed more Satanic, until they fell like Lucifer, by raising their impious arms against the Lord of glory. "And they are without excuse, because that when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful."

V. The doctrine which is thus applicable to the Jews, applies with increased force to *nations professing Christianity*—to all nations to whom God has committed the fuller revelation of His grace. We might speak of such nations

generally, but our thoughts naturally turn to our own. Have we not known God? Are we not blessed by Him with extraordinary and peculiar privileges? Does not England resemble ancient Judea? May not her people be compared with ancient Israel? To what modern nation has God revealed Himself so signally as the God of love has unto us? He dwelleth in our midst. To us are committed His oracles to keep, and to circulate in every tongue under the sun. What nation is more favoured with spiritual blessings than we? Over what country have the healing wings of the Sun of Righteousness been more visibly outspread? And how great our temporal prosperity! Where can we meet with greater? True, we have difficulties to contend against. But what peace reigns at home, what ease, what comfort! And how great our influence and power over the whole world! No nation has greater! Yea, they exceed those possessed by far-famed ancient Rome or Greece at the height of their glory!

Such are our privileges. And what use do we make of them? If we "know God"—if we profess that He only is our God, by what national acts do we "glorify Him as God?" Does He receive the glory due unto His holy name in the calm deliberation of our senators? Is His Word alone the acknowledged and the supreme rule of faith and practice? Is truth and piety upheld and protected, and are falsehood and idolatry trampled under our feet? Are the blood-stained banners of Protestantism cherished as the dearest trophies of a nation's greatness? Alas! it is a painful thing to bear witness against one's own country; but sure we are, that if our candlestick were removed, and we were suffered to relapse into the Pagan idolatry, which was once the religion of our fathers, we should be "without excuse, because that when we know God, we glorify Him not as God, neither are thankful."

One redeeming exception has of late been made. May the God of grace grant that it may prove the beginning of better things! The national fast was a national acknowledgment of God—it was more, it was "glorifying Him as God." We confessed not only our iniquities, but that the Lord himself was reigning, judging, condemning, punishing. And how gracious, and as it were instantaneous, has been the Lord's answer to our prayers! Before the proclamation enjoining the national humiliation was fully known to the nation, the God of heaven had proved, that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." And how continuous has been His blessing from that day! The "winds and the sea" then obeyed Him, and what abundance have they since conveyed to our island! The storehouses of this great city were empty; now they are not only full, but literally overflowing. There is not room to contain the abundance. How striking are the facts! How instructive the lesson!

And look at the fields white for the harvest! "They are joyful, and all that therein is!" "The mountains and the hills break forth (before the United Kingdom) into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands." And shall we alone, on whose account they sing, remain silent? Shall not we lift up our hands also in grateful adoration for the goodness of the Lord? Oh! I pray that as a nation we may unite in showing that we "glorify God, as God, and are thankful." Thankofferings should also abound from those who are sensible of the Lord's abounding mercy. Desirable objects worthy of support, and requiring increased aid, are well known to you. May the Lord enlarge our hearts!

If we make no public, no general, yea, no national acknowledgment of the Lord's answers to our prayers; if we are ungrateful for His tender mercies in relieving us from the horrors of the famine, and commanding the clouds to drop down fatness, what shall we have to say to Him, if our sins increase and draw down upon us during the on-coming year, either the same grievous evil, or one

of His other sore judgments, pestilence or the sword? Surely we shall be without excuse because that "when we know God, we glorify Him not as God, neither are thankful."

And now, brethren, before we conclude, I would ask you individually, whether you "know God," and if you know Him, whether you "glorify Him as God, and are thankful?" Do you know God as your *own* God—as your God of love—your God of peace? Do you know Him, so as to be constrained by His love, to give your whole heart to Him, and embrace Him as your covenant God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? Think not that this is a question of small importance. We solemnly tell you your salvation hangs upon it! To repeat your creed, is no proof that you know God as your God. Saving knowledge of Him is a gift that cometh from above. The Holy Spirit must convert, renew, sanctify, enlighten, enlarge, or you will never "know God," beyond a knowledge, enough to condemn you, but not enough to save you. We ask you then, do you know God as your covenant God in Christ Jesus? Has He discovered Himself to you in the "face of Jesus Christ?"

But if you think you know Him, have you "glorified Him as God?" You have doubtless made some effort to glorify Him, but have you rendered unto Him the glory agreeable to His nature, His attributes, His perfections, His greatness? Have you glorified Him as the Triune Jehovah? What glory due unto His name have you brought unto the Father? Do you love and serve Him as *your* Father? Can you call Him, Abba? What glory have you rendered unto Jesus? Have you glorified Him as God as well as man by taking up His cross and following Him, and calling Him, and obeying Him, as your "Lord and your God?" Have you glorified the Holy Ghost also as God? Have you cherished His indwelling, as being as much essential to your salvation as was the work of the Father in creation, and of the Son in redemption?

If not, what proof can you adduce that you "are thankful?" And if you continue unthankful, wherein do you differ from the angels who "kept not their first estate?" Impiety and ingratitude are inseparable evils. The former begets the latter. They are both ruinous to the soul. And their natures exclude all excuse. And if the heathen are without excuse, whose knowledge of God can be derived only from the light of nature, what excuse, think you, will you find before the throne of judgment, if with your superior knowledge of God, "you glorify Him not as God, neither are thankful?"

Excuses doubtless you have many, but they are all vain—as vain as those which Satan and his angels would plead for their rebellion; as vain as Adam and Eve did plead for their transgression. Every unconverted sinner has his own excuse, and every shade of iniquity has its own apology—but God admits of none. Before His all-searching eyes there can be none! The awakening of the sword of Justice against "the Man that is Jehovah's Fellow," proves there is none. Rather than excuse sin, God laid its awful curse upon His own Son. Sin has no excuse, no apology! But, blessed be the God of all grace and love, though it has no excuse, it has a *remedy*. That remedy is in the blood of the cross. In the bosom of Jesus every inexcusable sinner may find eternal refuge and safety. God has revealed himself in Him, as a pardoning God. This you know. This knowledge the heathen possess not. This knowledge the devils cannot profit by. But *you* know God as the God of salvation. *You* know Jesus as the only Saviour. What if you reject Him? You will be "without excuse, because that when you know God, you glorify Him not as God, neither are thankful."

## GOD'S LOVE TO MAN.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. GEORGE FISK, LL.B.

PREACHED IN CHRIST CHAPEL, MAIDA HILL,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, APRIL 18, 1847.

*"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*—John iii. 16.

FOR several Sabbaths, as you are, dear friends, aware, it has been my special aim, to address those in the midst of you, who may not as yet have experienced the grace of God unto the salvation of their souls. I have endeavoured to speak with the measure of that grace which has been bestowed on me, trusting in all fidelity that God would magnify His own Word, and lead them to the acceptance of the truth—to the acceptance of those rich provisions of His bounty and of His love which we have sought to make known to you. My wish now is, from the passage which I have read as the subject for meditation this evening, to draw such motives as shall act on you by way of gracious constraint, to compel your acceptance of the tender of God's mercy, so as to enable you from this day forward to "love Him who first loved you."

Suppose that between two fallen creatures there existed a matter of foul contention: suppose the injury had been so wrought by the one against the other, that the ancient friendship which once united them, had been shivered beyond all hope of remedy; but suppose, that while this feeling of alienation was growing up and increasing between them, in a moment the most unexpected the wrong-doer was told in a way which left no room for doubt, that he whom he had so grievously offended, breathed only towards him feelings of love and deep interest, that all that ever existed of animosity or bitterness against him was cast away, that all the kindness and warmth of early affections were about to return, and that if the wrong-doer believed that fact, he would by that very act of believing be received into the bosom of him whom he had offended, and that he would never mention the name of the offence or offences themselves, but that the bond of union should become indissoluble. In such a case we must all agree that motives of the most effectual kind were brought to act on the mind and heart of the wrong-doer; and that if such motives were to be rejected, it would be because the heart of the wrong-doer was not right—because it was a heart so hard as to be beyond the range of remedy in its way of evil-doing. But there is not, in my opinion, any heart which could stand against such motives. We are persuaded, that bad as human nature is, the wrong-doer would fly to the arms of his offended friend, cordially to receive these manifestations of love wherewith he was prepared to welcome him. This is exactly the case between us rebels and a gracious God: and this it

is, that our text leads us to. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Here we have a matter of fact—"God so loved the world;" here we have the proof alleged—"that He gave His only begotten Son;" and here we have the final end declared—"that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." These are the three particulars, from which I trust to be able to draw those motives, which I pray God may be made effectual on the minds of some sinners to-night, who never yet accepted the Gospel message, who never found either peace or joy in believing it.

I. First: the fact announced—"God so loved the world."

"The world." What world? Not, as the advocates of a restricted Gospel system would contend—not the elect of God *in* the world—but *the world*. Our translators have well translated the original word by that one expression "*the world*:" meaning by it the population of the earth—the posterity of Adam—the whole human family, without limitation or restriction of any sort. The love of God is a matter of fact, which has been extended not merely to the Jew, whom He loved with His most ancient love, but also to the Gentile; that love is extended to all the people of the earth—to every individual of every clime, to every inhabitant of every city and of every village. Oh! there is not a solitary individual in this wild howling waste of a world, to whom the love of God has not gone forth for his well-being. "God so loved *the world*, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Then into what a state had this world fallen! The whole human family, all the posterity of Adam, had fallen under the power of sin; all became totally alienated from God; all were held in the firm grasp of the arms of spiritual death; all became depraved, wretched, filthy, hideous, loathsome. And when man had rebelled against God, at the time when he manifested the strongest opposition to God, when the audacity of rebellion was at its height, when all help was hopeless, when it was beyond the reach of all human conception as to a remedy, then it was that God's love to man, which had been concealed from all eternity, manifested itself. When the fulness of time was come, heaven and earth appeared illumined with the brightness of God's presence. The Son of God, having robed Himself in the bright garments of love and tender fraternity, prepared Himself to save.

This is a fact which could only be conceived by us on the ground of revelation. Had philosophers in ancient days told us that God loved a sinful world, we might have urged the objection that therefore God loved sin; and that would have implied a surmise against the purity, the holiness, and the integrity of the Divine nature. Suppose we had it by a long line of ancient tradition that God loved this guilty world, and suppose no light from revelation had dawned on this world, we in this day—in this highly philosophic and rational age—would say that such a thing was incredible; that such a thing could not be conceived. We should want proof, and we should require evidence which would be the basis of that proof; we should want clear and full demonstration, that we might receive it. But the light of revelation has shown it; the voice of revelation has spoken it, the pen of revelation has written it, it is now stereotyped and made permanent in the very foundations of the Divine system—that God loved, and loves, a guilty world. Oh! if sin has burdened any man here this night; if it press on those who have grown up hardened in



iniquity, who have grown up in the practice of sin, who have given themselves soul and body to work transgression, who have cherished sin as a principle, who have given themselves to the work of sin as a matter of habitude, we are now free to tell every such man, that God loved him—that God still loves him, notwithstanding all the daring audacity which characterized him in his going forth in all his strength and power to resist God, to violate His commandments, to reject His Gospel. In the rejection of His free grace, God yet loves him. Let his character be black to the utmost possible degree, however the burden of sin may press on him with its overpowering weight, so that his conscience would testify to that degree that the heart within him shall tremble amidst its guilty fears, yet we say God loved him, and God loves him still. This does not argue that God loves the sin, but that He loved and loves the sinner.

This is not a matter of philosophy or of speculation. There is no room for debate in reference to it; it is as true as any fact that stands recorded on the page of history. The evidence on which it rests, is beyond the reach of suspicion; the proof is greater, fuller, and more abundant, than if legions of angels came down to our world to school us into the belief of this truth, and exhibited to us in its connection all that force of evidence which they might have at their command. The voice of God has declared it. Throughout eternity that truth shall remain unchanged—that God loved, and that God loves, the guilty creature.

## II. Secondly, consider the proof of it which is alleged.

The fact of God's love as unquestionable, as any matter of fact can be; but human facts admit of proof, and Divine facts admit of proof likewise. As all the facts that relate to the creature can be tested, the facts which relate to God can equally be tested. Not, however, because there is any likeness in point of degree between the two; but simply because God himself gives the means of testing and of proving them. God puts on record the facts He wishes us to believe, but while He does so, the proofs which He has supplied us with, are adapted to the nature of the case, and which proofs are seen in the very development of those facts. It is as if, to use an expression which may exemplify my meaning, God had in this respect manifested a wondrous spirit of self-denial. He might have given origin to races of beings brighter and more blessed, greater and nobler than man; He might have depopulated the heavens to procure a sacrifice to meet the necessities of man; and yet all this would have afforded but a limited proof of the wondrous fact, that God loved a guilty world. He might strike out the stars from their spheres, and render the bright firmament a waste, a wilderness; He might lay all these down as the redemption price for the guilt of man; and yet all that would afford no great manifestation of Divine love. But that act which declares His self-denial, which manifests the magnitude, the quality, the super-eminent excellency of this great love, affords data on which our mensuration may proceed in computing its magnitude.

Mark the expression. It is not that God loved the world, and therefore gave His only begotten Son; but the expression is, that He "*so* loved the world," that He gave the greatest possible gift. He "*so* loved the world;" the words are so intensely expressed as to convey the fullest idea we can form of the incalculable value of the gift. God therefore loved the world to such an extent, as not to give a few legions of angels or the firmament of brightness for its redemption, but the world was so loved by Him—His love to the world

was so intense and so real—that He gave a gift beyond all conception, beyond all value. Its value was such that it can neither be measured nor estimated. The love of others may be measured ; the gifts of others may be valued ; but who shall value God's love, that is like Himself—incomprehensible ? “ God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.”

What does this estimate involve ? “ He gave His only begotten Son.” “ He gave Him” for the purpose of incarnation ; He left the brightness of Heaven's habitation that He might assume flesh. He gave Him, that He might descend to the lowest depths of humiliation ; that He might drink the bitterest cup of human affliction. He gave Him, that He might stand forth the recipient by imputation of all man's guilt. He gave Him, that there might be “ laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” He gave Him, that there might be laid on Him that atrocity of which the most hardened sinner before God ever was guilty. He gave Him, that He might go into the grave of darkness and of death, and that He might gather honours from death ; that He might take up from the darkness of the grave the elements of that life which is imperishable, to be kept and perpetuated through all coming ages, while man needs life, and while God shall choose through His Son to bestow life. He gave Him, that He might be that marvellous and mysterious link, to reunite lost man to a loving, yet dishonoured God. He gave Him, that He might link the interests of heaven with those of earth, satisfy all the law's demands in the way of penalty, and do all that was to be done in the way of obedience : do all the law required. He gave Him, that by His blood as Redeemer He might be “ Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.” He gave Him, that standing forth as the “ resurrection and the life,” He might raise from a grievous solitude generations of by-gone ages, and bring them forth in all the reality of an unchanging existence, those who were the partakers of His resurrection life, as well as those who neglected the precious Gospel, and who perished amidst the corruption of sin. He gave Him, that He might stand forth in the day of His own power, when He would give up the triumphs of His salvation to His Father ; when He would present them before His Father's throne in all the fulness of joy, for which He panted and toiled and travailed ; when He shall say, “ Behold Me and the children Thou hast given Me.” Here is the proof of God's love. Let a father give the child of his love as a ransom for another—for an enemy—for one who would deprive him of his life ; let such a case be possible—let such an instance take place, even on so limited a scale as for one individual to give his life for another ; and there you have in a measure something like that love of Christ spoken of in our text. “ God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son ;” and He gave Him “ that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

### III. Lastly, the final cause which is declared.

Wherever the intentions of God are declared in Scripture, we find that they harmonize with those views which we have of the character of God. The final purpose here is explicitly stated : “ that whosoever believeth”—whosoever of the fallen family of Adam shall believe in Jesus whom the Father hath sent, first he shall not die ; and secondly, he shall have eternal life.

To such there shall be full immunity from all the consequences of sin. All the accumulation of sin shall neither be hurtful nor destructive to that believing sinner, whose penitence, whose contrition, and simple faith shall place him at the foot of the cross. Perish !—he shall not perish—he will not

perish—the decree of Heaven is, that he will not. Let the guilty sinner in the full confidence of faith rely on what God has stated in His Word; let him lay down the weapons of his rebellion, those weapons which he raised in opposition to his God—let him simply believe this plain truth, that God loved him, and that He loves him—let him believe on the faith of God's truth, that "He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life;" let him believe that, and dangers and perils shall pass away the moment he does so. He shall not perish, although the pollution of sin may be great, and the traces of sin may be fearful, and the recollection of sin may be overwhelming; although the testimony of conscience may be astounding, yet he shall not perish. God has said it, whose every word is registered in heaven. The promise is sure.

And if the message I deliver contains love so wondrous, should not that love be received? It should; and let us ask of God to cause the light of His truth to shine into the dark hearts of His creatures, and into our own dark hearts, that we may understand what is meant when it is said that we shall not die—that we "shall not perish, but have everlasting life." God would manifest great love and mercy to man by withdrawing the curse and remitting the penalty of sin—by not suffering man to drag out a miserable eternity without the hope of ever realizing the Divine glory, without the prospect of ever beholding the Divine countenance? But the word is not only that God remits the penalty of sin, that He puts away the consequences of sin, but that He bestows what was forfeited. God breathes new life into man's spirit; and by that life which God breathes into man by His Holy Spirit he becomes a living soul. In the act of believing there is on the part of God the act of infusing the gift of eternal life; and the pulsations of this new and spiritual life are felt in the living soul.

There is, you may observe, in my text, a word of very large extent—"whosoever believeth shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Thus the remedy extends to the utmost bounds of man's guilt. "Whosoever believeth" is invested with this precious gift—"everlasting life." 'But is not my case peculiar,' may not one say? 'Is there not something peculiar in my case because of my habitual sin?' Be it so—name all your peculiarities, bring out all your works of atrocity, present to view your full character, exhibit it in the light of God's Word with all its most fearful portraiture; and still we would lead you to that Word—"whosoever believeth shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

'But have I not,' may another say with tremulous anxiety—'have I not neglected these things too long? have I not despised, and disregarded, and dishonoured them? have I not heard hundreds of sermons all declaring truths like these—have I not heard many a time from faithful hearts and lips the same things, but was I not like the deaf adder who "refused to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely?"' Be it so; and add what you will to heighten the offence; yet we present to you the sure Word—that Word which embraces you in the wide circle of God's love—"whosoever believeth shall not perish, but have everlasting life;" shall be invested with all the blessings which a gracious and loving God can bestow, and bound up in eternity to be with the existence of Christ—the God-Man, the Mediator.

Surely, then, we present you with motives which should act on your minds, which should soften your hearts, however sin-hardened, and which should encourage within you a right spirit; which should encourage that spirit to begin aright to move. We have stated the final purpose declared, to convince the

lost sinner that he is not left beyond a remedy—that he is not out of the reach of hope. Whatever the amount of sin may be, however far distant the departure from God, yet we cannot escape the Word spoken of God's wondrous love to man through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let, however, the matters of fact spoken this night still continue to be despised and unbelieved—let the proofs of this love be treated with indifference—let them be rejected—let all the final purposes of God pass by disregarded, and I cannot answer for it that the love of God will hold out to you for another week. God loves you now ; but that God's remedy shall always continue open to you, I dare not declare. That the current of His love now flows, there can be no doubt ; and there can be no doubt that “now is the accepted time,” and this is “the day of salvation.”

“Seek ye the Lord, while He may be found ; call ye upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him ; and to our God for He will abundantly pardon.” Let the motive act—lay bare your hearts that it may act. Pray for the outpouring of the Spirit of God, that He may write the truth on your hearts, and make them like the melted wax prepared to receive the impression.

## THE OTHER COMFORTER.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. JOHN CUMMING, D.D.

OF THE SCOTCH NATIONAL CHURCH, CROWN COURT, COVENT GARDEN ;  
AT PRESENT OFFICIATING IN EXETER HALL.

*" Nevertheless I tell you the truth ; it is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."*—John xvi. 7.

JESUS had just told His disciples that He was about to leave them. This information was to them the severest stroke of all. It all but overwhelmed them. They felt that they were about to lose their greatest friend, their noblest and most unwearied benefactor. In His power they had realised exhaustless resources, and in His presence omnipotent protection, and, in His love, springs of sympathy and hope and peace. Their occasional separation from Him had already been found in their experience eminently perilous to their stability and safety. Their courage, heroic in His presence, evaporated in His absence ; and as they heard Him foretel His departure, they naturally asked themselves—' Who will now gather us, as a hen doth a brood under her wing ? who will guide us in difficulties, direct us in perplexities, shelter us and console us in the hour and power of sorrow ? His departure will be the extinction of our sun, the wreck of the vessel to which our all was entrusted, the blasting (in short) of all hope, the breath of fell despair.'

Yet Jesus said, " It is expedient for you that I go away." How could it be so ? Is it expedient that the parent should be torn from his offspring, the patron from his protégé, the master from his pupils, the bird from her callow brood ? If the oak be cut down, must not the parasite plants that clung to it for support, and fed upon its juices, die ? If the key-stone be removed, must not the whole arch give way ? Every analogy of life, every atom of experience, every heart-string within them, protested together that it was not expedient that Jesus should go away.

Yet beautifully and earnestly did Jesus reiterate—' I, who am the Truth—I, who never deceived you—I tell you it is expedient : ' and whenever Christ speaks all discussion should be closed ; His word should outweigh all probabilities, as it is stronger than all law. It made the universe, and will outlive it ; it sways the universe, and can bend and bow all its movements to its mighty purposes.

The departure of Christ was expedient, because His death was absolutely necessary : " It behoved Him to suffer, and rise from the dead on the third day." He also said—" Except a corn of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." An apostle also " opened and alleged that Christ must needs suffer, and rise again from the

dead." The death of the victim was essential to the validity of the sacrifice. "Without shedding of blood there was no remission" of sin. It was expedient that the expiatory offerings of Levi should be finished—that the dim institutions of the ancient economy should be illustrated, and that the great atonement, promised by prophets, sung by psalmists, and panted for by all creation, should be consummated. Such ancient promises as Isaiah xxxii. 15—"Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest;" Isaiah xlv. 3—"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring;" Joel ii. 28—"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions;" John vii. 38—"He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water;" and John xiv. 16—"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever."

The great reason why it was expedient that Christ should go away was, no doubt, that the Spirit, the Comforter, might come. This is shown by reference to Acts ii. 23—"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain;" and Ephesians iv. 8—"Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." Christ must be removed, that the Comforter may come. So it ever must be: things dear and beautiful must fade, that better things may occupy their place. He who never knew what it is to be tossed to and fro, never learned what the preciousness of the Gospel is. The life of such an one must be like a smooth surface, from which the healing waters of the Gospel must glide off. When God takes the bud, however, it is that he may give the blossom; and when He takes the green, it is that He may supply the ripe. Jesus therefore presented the apostles with the prospect of a glorious compensation, a blessed substitute for His absence. He said—"Amid the crushing trials and dark hours of life, when human arms grow weary, and human sympathies expire—when the canopy above is all darkness, and the prospect before you all black, My Spirit shall rend the clouds, and reveal to you new glories, and breathe into your hearts a new inspiration, and your sorrowing hearts shall find what your glad hearts never sought, a peace which the world cannot give, and which it cannot take away."

It was expedient that He should go away, in order that they might learn to "walk by faith." Hitherto they had "walked by sight." The feeling of all was the creed of Mary—"If Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." They had hitherto believed only in One they saw and heard; they had no trust in the far off, no confidence in the unseen. Now, however, the outward restraints and props were to be withdrawn, that their inward principles might stand erect in their own strength; the crutch was to be cast away, and the disciple was to walk alone. Their love must now burn as brightly in the absence as it did in the presence of Jesus. The carnal eye must close on a visible Saviour, and the spiritual eye must open to a Saviour within the veil, invisible to flesh and blood.

The man Christ Jesus was the utmost height to which their hearts had risen. The mountain-brow, the fisherman's boat, the earthly temple, the crown of thorns, were the limits of their horizon. They had now to pass

through the manhood, and lean on the love of the unseen Godhead. Humanity must not be the soul's resting-place, but the medium through which it may reach its resting-place. It was therefore expedient that Jesus of Nazareth should retire, in order that the eternal Son of God might occupy His place—that the Lamb upon the cross should give way to the Lamb upon the throne—and the ear be shut to the infuriated cry, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," and open only to the hosannahs of them "that do continually cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts."

It is the great error of the church of Rome, as it is indeed the tendency of all humanity, to keep a visible Christ. That church practically says—"It is not expedient that Jesus should go away, and therefore we must have a visible figure, a visible Calvary, a visible victim, holy robes and crucifixes." She, in fact, would rather "touch the hem of His garment," than believe in His name and be saved. Nevertheless, it was expedient that He should go away. We have lost the Saviour as the "Man of sorrows," to find Him as the Son of God. The crucified is enshrined in the glorified. "If we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth we know Him no more" after the flesh.

It was expedient that Christ should go away, in order that the conversion of the ends of the earth might be hastened. As man He could be in one place only; there was a brilliant light, but it illumined Palestine only; there was a glorious beacon, but it was on one shore only. Rome slept in her midnight, Athens in darkness, and the whole earth in its cold aphelion; while one consecrated acre only glowed with light. It was essential that this narrow sphere should be enlarged, and that no longer as a local light, but as "the Sun of Righteousness," Jesus should take possession of His celestial throne, and pour down His beams upon Jew and Gentile.

It was expedient that Christ should go away, in order that the apostles might have an ampler field of ministry. As long as Jesus was on earth they clung to His person, and preached only within the range of His presence; they moved along the shores, but dared not launch out into the deep; theirs was the ministry of a parish, instead of the mission of the whole earth. His elevation from the midst of them was the removal of the visible central column, and the scattering of the apostles to the ends of the earth. All local and national ties, binding to a spot, were broken, and they went forth to preach on Mars' hill, as they had done on Mount Zion—the luminaries of the world, not merely the lights of Judea; and to make every tongue, however barbarous or refined, the vehicle of "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

The apostles themselves gave personal evidence on the day of Pentecost how expedient it was that Christ should go away. The contrast between Peter, the companion of his blessed Master, and Peter, the subject of the unction of the Holy Ghost, is most strikingly displayed. We find Peter the fisherman and companion of Jesus, described in Matthew xiv. 28—31—"And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Matthew xvi. 22—"Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee." Luke v. 8—"When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Luke xxii. 54—"Then took they

Him, and led Him, and brought Him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off." John xiii. 6—"Then cometh He to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto Him, Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" John xviii. 10—"Then Simon Peter having a sword, drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear." And also we have Peter the apostle, after the day of Pentecost, pourtrayed in Acts ii. 14—"But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, Ye men of Judæa, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words." Acts iii. 12—"And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" Acts iv. 8—"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole." It was not miraculous gifts that made the difference. There was a progress in Divine life and light created, in consequence of the effusion of the Holy Spirit on the hearts and conduct of the apostles, so palpable that "he that reads may run." They saw Christ after His departure, as they had never seen Him before, and they preached the truths of the Gospel with a fulness, a faithfulness, and a power, that proves incontestably they were the subjects of a new and Divine unction.

It may indeed be asked—'Was not the Spirit in the Jewish church as truly as in the Christian?' We answer—He was as truly, but not as fully. As Christ was in the ancient church before His incarnation, so was the Spirit before His effusion at Pentecost. The incarnation was the manifestation of the fulness of Christ's life; the Pentecostal effusion was the manifestation of the Spirit's power.

May not the promise of the Spirit, let me ask, enable us also to make progress, not only in the clearer apprehension of truths we know, but in the full discovery of latent truths, that may have escaped us? We cannot indeed add to the Scripture, but we may nevertheless discover in it precious thoughts that have hitherto escaped us; we cannot add to the book of creation, and yet we may discover in it additional facts, richer harmony, new fibres running below and linking things the most remote with others the most near. The Bible is an exhaustless mine, and other ingots may yet be found in it—a sea whose floor is covered with gems and pearls, and he that dives deepest and oftenest will bring up the brightest. Progress in acquaintance with Divine truth and in adjusting what seems conflicting, is in fact daily made. The reformers had clearer apprehensions of truth than the fathers, and we than the reformers. True, the last century is not always in advance of its predecessor; our course is not continuously rectilinear. Like the course of a ship at sea, it is zig-zag, but actual progress as a whole.

Certain portions of Divine truth have always been clearly seen, because they have always been obtruded by the sacred penmen, in intense light and prominence; such as the Trinity, the incarnation, the atonement; but there are other truths partly beyond the horizon, partly luminous, clearer conceptions of which we shall attain day after day.

It may also be expedient for us, as well as for the apostles, that Christ should go away, and that the human should shine far remote, amid the



effulgence of the Divine. We read His life; we are smitten with that magnificent example, that unequalled foot-print upon the sands of time, and are apt to forget His yet higher functions—His atoning death, His prevailing intercession, His enthronization and glory. It is expedient, therefore, that the exemplar should be withdrawn for a little, that we may gaze without distraction on the atoning victim, and that even that atoning victim should be removed from earth, that we may behold in that victim the satisfying God.

He who sent the Comforter at first, still sends Him. He sends Him to transform and ripen His elect for glory. All the purchase of His blood is not yet gathered in; all the travail of His so He has not yet seen; all the crowns destined for Him are not yet on His head; all His guests are not yet seated at His table; all His jewels are not yet placed in their caskets. He can do what my feeble voice is inadequate to do, imprint on your hearts the everlasting truths that now sound in your ears.

Behold the great privilege of the people of God! They are summoned to come near to God himself; the Holy Spirit is sent from God, to bring His children by Christ to the presence of God. No earthly element or sacrament may come between; this is a blood-bought prerogative; "a stranger" may "not intermeddle" with it. You need not, my brethren, the lenses of the priest—the Spirit of God has touched the eye of your souls with eye-salve; you need not the anointings of man—for you have the unction of God; you need not the canonized urn—for you have access to the deep and illimitable sea; you can do without the priest's farthing candle—for it is your privilege to look upon the great central and celestial sun. In short, you are not left dependent for eternal life on any order of men; "that your faith may stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

## FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. HUGH M'NEILE, D.D.

PREACHED IN ST. JUDE'S CHURCH, LIVERPOOL,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 5, 1847.

*"The fellowship of His sufferings."*—Philippians iii. 10.

THE suffering of Christ and the glory that shall follow—such is the great theme of inspired prophets, as described by the apostle Peter; and the same apostle exhorts Christians to "rejoice, inasmuch as they are partakers of Christ's sufferings." Christ's sufferings are the theme of the most affecting chapter in the New Testament history; they occupy a very fundamental place in the scheme of New Testament doctrine; and they supply a peculiarly appropriate subject of meditation to New Testament disciples, on their assembling round their Lord's table. Of course St. Paul discusses this subject in his usual manner. As many of you as have persevered in assembling here on the Thursday evenings\* have recently had an opportunity of considering afresh how all the penetrating particulars of experimental Christianity are transferred by St. Paul from the coldness of abstract theory into the warmth and animation of personal history. He discusses Christianity in the first person, making himself a sample of what the experience of his brethren in Christ will be to the end of the dispensation. It is in one of these bursts of sacred eloquence that the words of our present text are found. The apostle tells us of his position in days past, when he was a Pharisee. He then tells us of his conversion to Christianity, when that which had been "gain" to him appeared no better than "loss." He next tells us of his settled state of mind concerning the acceptance of a sinner in Christ; and then he describes his ardent desires concerning the conformity of a Christian to Christ. It is in this last topic that our text occurs. Having declared his acceptance with Christ, and rejoiced in it, he expresses his fervent desire, not only to be "found in Him, having His righteousness," but, further, that He may "know" Him; he adds, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection,"—the quickening power which is exercised by the Holy Spirit in the Christian heart, and which is likened to that power which raised Christ from the dead,—*"and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."*

In order to a fellowship with these sufferings we must of course know what they are; and those persons who are the most intimately acquainted with all the revealed particulars of the Lord's sufferings will ever be found most ready and willing to retrace again and again, in devout contemplation, the solemn steps of that wonderful Sufferer. Let us do so, my brethren, that, looking unto Him so suffering, we may, by the grace of God, have more of the "fellowship of His sufferings," which is, in truth, the distinguishing characteristic of His disciples in a world, which makes light of both His sufferings and the cause of

\* Alluding to a course of Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans.  
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them—a world which seeks to laugh itself into forced merriment, “making a mock at sin,” until it shall be too late to seek remission.

First, then, I invite you to reconsider—for we have often considered—who it was that suffered. Christ, God and Man, in one person. He took the manhood into Godhead in the unity of one person; in suffering human, in merit Divine. The Divine nature did not, and could not, suffer considered by itself; yet, as the human nature in Christ had no subsistence except in the unity of one person with the Divine, we must say, concerning the Person who suffered, that He was both God and man; and therefore although we distinguish between the two natures, as we do between body and soul in man, yet, not dividing the person into two, we say, as the apostle Paul said, that the Lord of glory was crucified. He said of the rulers, “Had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” It is because of the unity of the person combined in the two natures that such a statement is admissible, and seeing that the union is a revealed truth such a statement becomes indispensable. It was this mysterious union which gave Him capacity to feel for men, while He had at the same time capacity to prevail with God. It was this that qualified Him to be a Daysman, “laying a hand upon both,” a character to find which the patriarch Job laboured, a character which it is our privilege to have found. This is the answer, then, to the important question, who it was that suffered.

Christ suffered under the hand of God, and He suffered under the hand of man. In His sufferings, as they proceeded from the hand of God, it is our safety to trust; and in His sufferings as they proceeded from the hand of man, it is our privilege to sympathise. We ask, then, in the next place, what He suffered; and the answer is, “the curse of the law.” “God made Him to be a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” The curse of the law implies the anger of the Lawgiver; and here lies the gist of the wonderful sufferings of Christ. The anger of God was upon Him; and exposure to that anger is the essence of hell. He who is accused of God is in hell when he knows that such is the case. Owing to the want of communication between man and the invisible world, thousands and tens of thousands of men are exposed to the curse of God without knowing it; and they are really under the pressure of what constitutes hell, although, because the flesh for a time conceals it, they are ignorant of their ruin. The flesh in Christ’s case did not hinder His full communication with the invisible world. He needed not to leave the body as you do in order to have unveiled communion. Therefore, when the anger of God against sin was presented to that Divine Sufferer, there was the most marvellous event that can take place. There was seen, not a wicked soul in hell, but a holy soul in hell; not a soul defying God, writhing in agony and endless despair, growing viler as it suffered, but a soul, with all the tenderness and susceptibility of heavenly love, exposed to the pressure of the sufferings of hell. I do not think that any language which it is possible to use can at all convey from one man to another, nor do I believe that it is possible for any Christian man adequately to conceive, the intensity of the conflict by which the Saviour’s bosom was agitated, when He fell upon the ground in the garden and said, “O My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from Me.” Neither do I think we can express, or adequately conceive, the dreadful anguish, the depth of torture which at the last wrung from Him the cry, “Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani.” But this we do know, that it was the curse of that law under which we were all born and all live, that moral law which is God’s revealed will respecting the conduct of man.

And this leads to an equally simple but also equally important question—namely, why He suffered. Looking at this more in the way of experience than of theory, more with the heart, for personal improvement, than with the head, for

personal enlightenment, the true Christian says, 'Ah! here I see what I am; I perceive what I was justly exposed to, what I most righteously deserved; here I make a discovery far from flattering to my own self-complacency. I see here that I was a sinner indeed, a rebel and an outcast; that there was a demand righteously to be made of me which I could not answer. My suffering throughout eternity could make no reparation for the insult offered to an infinite God; here I see that cup which would have kept me in unutterable anguish, and the drinking of which I could never have finished, drained to the dregs. In no other glass can I see myself so plainly as in this. Every other view can afford something to soothe, something to soften, something to flatter, but here I see what I really am; in what Jesus suffered, I see God's view of what I deserve to suffer.' This is entering into "the fellowship of Christ's sufferings." So that, though we be rescued from personal participation with Him in those sufferings, yet we are not rescued from such a view of His endurance as gives us a tender fellowship with Him.

Here also we perceive what sin is, and its true and exceeding sinfulness; here we see afresh the bitterness of that root, planted in the earth and growing up in every branch of the tree of Adam, fraught with poison for eternity. The majesty of God is infinitely affronted; the justice of God takes infinite vengeance; the holiness of God expresses detestation and abhorrence; the light of the Father's countenance is hid from the beloved Son. What must be the dense darkness of that cloud which shuts out the Son from the beams of the Father's majesty, which interposes between the light of heaven and the holiness of Jesus, and casts the best beloved of God into the depths of hell? The history of angels bears testimony to what sin is. When some of them sinned God spared them not, but cast them down into everlasting shame and darkness. The history of the whole world bears witness to what sin is. When the men of that age sinned God spared them not, but sent out His flood to destroy the myriads of the ungodly. The history of the cities of the plain bears witness to what sin is. When they offended God, fire and brimstone from heaven attested the vileness of their ingratitude. The history of the Canaanites, the Hivites, the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Perizzites bears testimony to their sin. When their iniquity was full, hailstones from heaven slew more than the sword of Joshua and all Israel; they were exterminated by the command of the Lord. The histories of Nineveh, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome, all bear witness to what sin is. Why have the mighty empires of the earth crumbled to ruin? Why has insubordination in the people brought trouble, distress, and ruin upon the rulers? Sin has been the cause of this. If we could ever have had a government without sin, we should have had a nation without insurrection; and at whatever period it might have been formed, it would have stood until now. The history of the Jews bears witness to what sin is. When they provoked the Lord God of heaven and earth, they were cast away, and they now stand forth as a beacon, not to be read of in history, like other nations, but to be gazed upon every day, as though God had said, 'Look in this man's face and see what sin is; he is a wanderer and a vagabond; he belongs to a stock which I discarded eighteen hundred years ago. Instead of cutting him off from the face of the earth, I have kept him for you to behold; look at him, and learn the exceeding sinfulness of sin.' The history of our own country, of our own neighbourhood, of our own families, nay, of our own hearts, bears witness to what sin is. All these witnesses put together, however, do but utter a whisper compared with the thunder-sound of that testimony respecting sin which rises, still unre-echoed, from the groanings of Gethsemane and the cries of Calvary. There, and there alone, we see truly what sin is. In every other glass we have, as it were, but a human measure; here we have a Divine one. And as in this suffering of

Christ we see something of what sin is, and therefore of what we are, so also we see something of what God is. Why this dreadful anguish? What led to it? What is it for? Why is the beloved of God an outcast? Why is the dearest object of His soul made a curse? My brethren, the cause is love; God so loved us, unrighteous as we are, that in order righteously to save us, He "bruised" His own Son. "Herein is love, not that we loved Him," or did anything to induce this, but "that He loved us, and gave Himself to be the propitiation for our sins." "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed." It all springs from His love; that is the deep fountain whence the well rises. And while by the sufferings of Christ we may measure, if we can, the Divine justice, by the gift of Christ we may measure, if we can, the Divine love.

"Jesus the gift of gifts appears,  
To show that God is love."

These are the meditations which lead the heart into "fellowship with His sufferings"—these the thoughts which give us a personal interest in all this wonderful work. This is the mode of occupation most suitable to the Lord's table; this is eating Christ's flesh and drinking Christ's blood. Christ is "the truth," Christ is "the life," "the bread," "the way." How do men avail themselves of a way? By walking in it. How of bread? By eating it. How of truth? By believing it. Hear how Christ himself combines these things. "He that believeth in Me shall never hunger." How so? Believing is not eating; yet Christ says, "He that believeth in Me shall never hunger." He adds, "and he that cometh to Me shall never thirst." How so? Coming to Him is not drinking, it is true; but in the sense of eating and drinking intended by Him, believing is "eating" and coming is "drinking." He combines these things. He does not say, you perceive, "He that eateth Me shall never hunger;" but, "he that believeth in Me shall never hunger." Take notice of this, brethren, and keep it in remembrance. If you have, in the penetrated interest of a believing spirit, followed the statements already made to you in this place, you have been engaged in the very process which the Lord intended to present to us in the Supper; you have been dealing with the truth as it has reached your ears, just as we desire you to deal with the bread and the wine as they reach your taste. He has commanded that the truth shall be presented to your ears in the preaching of the Word, to your eyes in the writing and preservation of the Scriptures, and to your taste in the bread and the wine. It is the same truth in each case. There is not a peculiar truth to be conveyed by the bread which is not conveyed by the preaching; and there is no charm connected with the wine which is not equally connected with the word. The same truth is conveyed in different ways. He would besiege your senses with His love, and carry it to you through every avenue—through your ears, your eyes, and your taste.

But let us trace our suffering Lord a little further. Hitherto we have seen Him suffering under the hand of God; now let us consider, for the purpose of "fellowship," His sufferings under the hands of men. Men were Satan's instruments, stirred up against Christ. During the personal ministry of Christ a great crisis in the world's history took place. In the garden of Eden Satan had obtained an easy victory, and he attempted to gain another in the wilderness of Judea and in the garden of Gethsemane. In the latter case, as in Eden, he found a Man—a Man of tenderest susceptibilities, a "Man of sorrows," weeping with strong cries and tears, and whose agony was such that "He sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Satan exerted all his ingenuity to gain another victory; and he would have gained it, had he found one thing more in the Sufferer. He found everything

belonging to fallen humanity with one exception, and that was sin; there was no sin there. To this the Lord himself referred when He said, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." He hath nothing congenial to him in Me; when his flint strikes, there is no fire in Me. But though Satan failed to discover sin in Christ, yet would he, through the enduring malice of his disposition, continue to harass and vex the Sufferer by means of human instruments. How he assailed Him directly and in person we cannot judge. We read, that when he left Him after the temptation in the wilderness, he quitted Him only for a season; and doubtless he attacked Him frequently with the invisible assaults of his fiery darts. Into that purely spiritual conflict we cannot, I think, very deeply enter, and we can form but little notion of its extreme intensity. But when Satan assailed the Saviour by the instrumentality of men, the conflict was such as we can better appreciate. He found suitable instruments for his purpose in the rulers of those days, both ecclesiastical and civil. Nothing could induce them to listen even to common justice, as regarded Christ; they were determined to carry matters to extremity against their victim. The civil rulers were weak and corrupt. They were both, therefore, suitable instruments for Satan to make use of. The ecclesiastical rulers were guilty of the meanness, as well as the cruelty, of suborning witnesses against the Saviour. It is difficult, however, to make falsehood hang together; and so these rulers found it, for their persecutions broke down for want of harmony amongst their witnesses. They sought many false witnesses; and though many came, yet they "found none"—that is, none whose testimony agreed; and it was only on the agreeing testimony of two witnesses that sentence could be passed according to law. They were prejudiced, however; and having prejudged the cause, they proceeded, in defiance of law, to pronounce sentence against the prisoner. Then, adding insult to injury, they allowed the inferior officer of the court to buffet Him and to spit upon Him, and the court itself did not interfere to prevent the indignity. The court put a question to him directly involving the great truth for which the prisoner came into the world. This question He answered truly; but His answer was condemned as blasphemy. They had then done their worst. They had power to condemn Him, but they had not power to execute Him; for this purpose they were obliged to hand Him over to the civil power. And this they did. The civil ruler was weakly corrupt. He was not wholly abandoned; for he had conscience enough to make him waver in his decision, he had sense of justice enough to make him willing to save an innocent prisoner. He knew that it was from envy, and not on account of any crime, that the chief priests had condemned Him. Why not, then, deliver Him? His superstition as a heathen came to strengthen his convictions as a man and his duty as a magistrate. His wife had a dream, and she sent to tell him of it, exhorting him to "have nothing to do with that innocent man." Everything conspired to induce Pilate to discharge his duty. He had only to give the word to the proper authorities under him, and the death of an innocent man would have been prevented. Then why did he not do so? His own temporal interest was, or seemed to be, involved. The Jews were greatly exasperated against Jesus. If Pilate had preserved Him from their fury by force, an insurrection in the city, and, probably, in the whole province, might have been the consequence. Pilate knew what sort of men he had to deal with at Rome. The emperor of that time was full of caprice, as well as of power; and if he had heard of an insurrection through the conduct of Pilate, all hope of further promotion for the governor of Judea would have been at an end. On the other hand, if by management he could preserve peace in a province known to be ready for any disturbance, he would gain corresponding credit at home, and he might look for further honours at the hands of his imperial

master. Therefore he was willing to keep peace and to content the people. He tried to escape from the difficulty, by availing himself of the practice amongst them of having a prisoner delivered at a feast. There were many prisoners, but he fixed upon two—one a notable murderer who had been guilty of insurrection, the other Jesus. In limiting their selection to these two, he calculated upon their choosing Jesus, and thus becoming themselves the instruments of delivering Him, while he would escape from his dilemma. But temporising measures seldom answer the purpose. Agitators soon perceive whether rulers have principle, or whether they are only seeking present peace and convenience. The agitators in Judea saw what sort of a ruler they had, and that if the pressure were sufficiently strong he would yield. They contrived to make it so, and he did yield. He made an attempt, too, to mystify the matter, by asking, "What is truth?" And he did not wait for an answer. He gave up an innocent Man into the hands of an infuriated rabble.

Now where is our fellowship in all these sufferings? As regards His sufferings before an unjust tribunal, ecclesiastical and civil, we are not called to personal participation in such sufferings. You have cause, my dear brethren, to thank God abundantly for the course of justice in this land, albeit, it is not entirely what it should be in all parts of the dominions of our gracious sovereign. There are places not far distant, where the course of justice is perverted. We have no reason as yet to complain of anything of this kind in our own country. If there be anything that runs pure in England, it is the course of justice in our public courts. But though, personally, we are not called to participate in Christ's sufferings, what shall we say to the truth of the Gospel as regards the treatment it receives both ecclesiastically and civilly? Have we not reason to cultivate the "fellowship of Christ's sufferings," seeing that the truth of God is scorned, that the supreme authority of God's Word is disregarded, and that the present convenience of men, and the present plea of equality amongst men, utterly supersede the authority of the revealed will of God? Ought we not to have such a regard for God's truth, that it cannot be an indifferent matter to us to see it practically and publicly despised? Ought we not to have such a regard for it as to feel grieved when men of authority and rank amongst us declare that nothing certain is revealed, and that truth and error are things which we cannot deal with? This would be perfectly true, if God had not spoken—if we were left in this world, amid all its varying aspects, and all the calamities which befall us, without any revelation. It would, in that case, be most presumptuous for any man to say that, he was right and his neighbour wrong. But if God have spoken indeed, and if men do not deny that He hath spoken; if it be admitted on all hands, that His truth is in this book, and yet, if practically the truth of the book be cast on one side by poor fallen creatures, and their own convenience preferred to His authority, should we not grieve and say with Jeremiah in our first lesson of to-day—"Fear ye not Me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at My presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass it." Fear ye not God who hath given us the appointed harvest, and who causes the rain to fall and the sun to shine upon us? Instead of fearing and obeying Him, are you fearing and obeying another; worms that shall die, creatures of the dust? While we enter into the defence of the truth, let us also enter into the "fellowship of His sufferings who died for us," and who was treated personally precisely as His truth is now treated. He was set aside for the convenience of ecclesiastical and civil rulers; He was too troublesome for them, they could not endure such doctrine. His truth condemned the world, and the world turned and condemned the truth. If the Master of the house fared thus, what shall befall the servants? And if they who call themselves His servants do not fare thus, are they honest, are

they faithful and true, or are they not rather trying to "serve two masters," and to have peace with both?

Let us seek, then, my dear brethren, to have fellowship in the Lord's sufferings. Let us come to the Lord's table to seek the spirit that was in Christ. When Christ was condemned He was given into the hands of the Roman soldiers, who were instruments of gratifying the petty malice of Satan. This trial was very vexatious. Violence was done to all those finer feelings which are the ornaments of mind, to all that shrinking delicacy which is so lovely, and which even amongst fallen creatures supplies a veil to hide much that is evil. There was genuine tenderness, and the most delicate feeling, in Him who exhibited in perfection all that adorns humanity. How must these have been outraged when those brutal soldiers stripped Him in the Prætorium, and put a crown of thorns on His head, while they mocked His royalty by crying—"Hail, King of the Jews!" when they put a reed in His hand for a sceptre, and threw scorn upon the great truth, for the "recompense of the reward" of which He was meekly suffering all this indignity!

Here, then, was suffering of various kinds—suffering because of indignity done to truth, and suffering because of indignity offered to man—the tender, delicate Man Christ Jesus. It is our privilege to have fellowship in all these sufferings, and to know that He has consecrated the path for us. Many of you may have been called to endure exposure for health's sake; there may have been an indispensable necessity for some medical process or surgical operation, which has placed you in that position. In such an hour you may have had fellowship in Christ's exposure. Every pang may have been sanctified, and every tender feeling may have led to fresh consecration to God. In conclusion, may the Lord in His mercy, enable those among you who have already partaken of the blessedness of this truth, to feel continued enjoyment in it, and also enable all those who are about to assemble round His table to have fellowship with Christ.



## THE CHURCH ON EARTH AND THE CHURCH IN HEAVEN.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. HUGH HUGHES, D.D.

PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, CLERKENWELL,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 5, 1847.

*"But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."*—Hebrews xii. 22—24.

IN this beautiful and significant passage the blessed privileges of the church on earth and the glorious privileges of the church in heaven are happily and expressively blended together. It is introduced by the apostle for the double purpose of encouraging the converts from Judaism to Christianity to patience under affliction, and of urging them, by the most exalted considerations, to preserve the integrity of their faith and holiness. They were no longer under the legal dispensation under which their fathers had lived, and which resounded with threats of punishment against the transgressor, but under the evangelical dispensation which had been promised by the prophets, and which re-echoed with tidings of pardon to the believer. Whatever afflictions, therefore, might be allotted them on earth, they might well bear them, seeing that the terrors of Divine wrath were removed and they had peace with God; and whatever temptations to sin they might encounter, they might well resist every seduction to evil and despise every unhallowed pleasure, seeing that they had set before them in the Christian race such an unspeakable recompense of reward. "For," saith the apostle, "we are not come" like our forefathers "unto the Mount that might be touched," that is, the material Mount Sinai, whence the law was promulgated, "and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest; and the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice they that heard, entreated that the Word should not be spoken unto them any more. (For they could not endure that which was commanded; and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart. And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake). But," with you the case is very different: "ye are come to Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

In this representation, when we consider the persons to whom it was made,

and the time in which it was written, there must have been an emphasis and a pathos, of which we can scarcely form an adequate conception. It was addressed to converted Jews, to those who had been wont to regard Jerusalem, and its magnificent temple, and gorgeously appareled priests, and splendid ceremonies of worship, with feelings of profoundest veneration. It was penned about the year of Christ 63, when that city was about to undergo the horrid calamities, which had drawn forth the deep lamentations and bitter tears of the "Man of sorrows." In the prospect of this event and in the retrospect of it, as well as under the burden of other fears and sufferings, this representation of the apostle was most eminently calculated to encourage hope, to confirm faith, and to enlist the feelings on the side of pure and undefiled religion. *Before* the destruction of Jerusalem it would raise their minds above all the scenes of distress which impended over them; and *after* the destruction of Jerusalem it would soothe their sad regrets at the national glories which had passed away. What though the Mount Sion, on which rested the edifice of Solomon, was no longer an object of attraction? They were come to the spiritual Sion, the platform of the nobler privileges and purer worship, introduced by a better covenant than that of Sinai. What though the city of David was about to be laid waste or was already a heap of ruins? They were on their way to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, whose foundation is on the everlasting hills, and cannot be moved at any time. What though they could no longer mingle with the multitude, which went with the voice of joy and praise to the house of God in the metropolis of their forefathers? They were by faith associated, and would ere long face to face converse with an "innumerable company of angels, with the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and with the spirits of just men made perfect" in holiness and bliss. What though they were oppressed and persecuted, and their names cast out as evil by misjudging men? They had through the cheering light of the Gospel a ready access, by the prayer of faith, to God, the impartial Judge of all. What though the covenant between Jehovah and their fathers, who were once His peculiar people, had come to an end, and they had no longer any altars or sacrifices to propitiate heaven by the daily shedding of the blood of beasts, and there was no visible high priest to intercede for them on the great day of yearly atonement? They had believed "in Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant," and learnt to apply the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Let us now attend particularly to these several privileges and prospects of believers, and observe their applicability to the followers of the Redeemer in every age.

#### I. First they are said to have "come to Mount Sion."

By Mount Sion we are here to understand chiefly, the church of Christ on earth. It is called Mount Sion, in evident allusion to the hill where God's acceptable worship was performed under the old dispensation. It is called a mountain in other parts of Scripture for various and important reasons. For example, a mountain is generally a conspicuous object, and is seen from far and near. So is the church of Christ. Like "a city set on a hill it cannot be hid." It is seen by heaven and earth and hell. It is viewed by God with infinite complacency, and gracious protection. It is viewed by angels, with sublimest hopes and raptures of anticipated joy. It is viewed by wicked men, with contempt and scorn. It is viewed by evil spirits with envy and hate. A mountain is peculiarly exposed to storms. So is the church of Christ exposed to storms; to storms of suffering and storms of fears; to storms of persecution from the children of disobedience; and to storms of temptation from the prince of darkness. But notwith-

standing those hostile assaults, like a mountain it remains immovably secure, God being engaged by promise to keep it, being ever present to keep it, being ever watchful to keep it.

"So fix'd by Providence's hand,  
A rock amidst the ocean stands;  
So bears without a trembling dread,  
The tempest beating on its head;  
And with its side repels the wave,  
Whose hollow seems a coming grave:  
The skies, the deeps are heard to roar,  
The rocks stand settled as before."

Again, a mountain is a shelter from the raging tempest to those who dwell at its base or sides. So is the church of Christ a safe shelter from the frowning judgments of heaven to those who seek refuge in its strong defences. A mountain is a repository of benefits, receiving on its summits the dropping treasures of the sky, and then sending them forth in welling streams to refresh and fertilize the surrounding country. So is the church of Christ the source of unspeakable blessings to mankind, being blessed with the manifold grace of God,—with "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord"—and being the instrument of conveying these gifts to the dark and desolate hearts of sinners, and thereby causing the moral "wilderness and solitary place to be glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose." Well then may it be called a mountain—a hill of the Lord. Draw ye nigh to this Mount Sion, and ye shall find it to abound in all the sources of consolation, security, and hope, and to re-echo with the sweet tidings of salvation, and the glad words of welcome, "Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

II. Connected with Mount Sion in the apostle's representation is "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."—The earthly Jerusalem was called the city of God, because among other reasons it was appointed of God to be the metropolis of His chosen people, the royal residence of David His anointed, the grand scene of public worship, and the special place for exhibiting to human eyes the symbol of the Divine presence in the luminous cloud resting between the cherubim. The same name is here applied with greater emphasis to the church, being the company of God's faithful people, having been purchased by God's Son, the antitype of David, and honoured by the descent upon it of God's Spirit, the antitype of the luminous cloud. But we believe that by the city of the living God is in this passage chiefly meant the home of the redeemed in the celestial regions. It is expressly called the *heavenly Jerusalem*, and that is the place most entitled to the name of the city of God; for there the Divine presence is manifested in all its glory, more beautiful than the firmament, more radiant than the stars, more brilliant than the sun, and all the bright objects which glitter in mortal eyes, and all the resplendent things which flit across the most exalted spiritual vision have no glory by reason of that heavenly glory which excelleth. That city has attractions with which those of no other can bear a comparison. It far exceeds the beauties of Eden, whose trees and fruits and flowers and verdant fields and refreshing breezes and crystal fountains and living streams have filled the poet's heart with rapture, and transported his imagination with delight. It is constructed of costlier materials, and ornamented with more exquisite embellishments, its foundations being of precious stones, its walls of jasper, its gates of rarest pearls, and its palaces of choicest gold. In the midst of it is the throne of the Eternal, and out of that throne proceeds the river of unfailing life, and on the banks of that river flourishes the tree, which yields the fruit of a blissful immortality. No evil ever

enters its borders. No sin ever interferes with its holiness. No trouble ever disturbs its harmony. No sorrow ever dims its brightness. No darkness ever clouds its sky. No moon is required to light it by night; no sun to cheer it by day, for God himself illuminates it with an everlasting light, and the Lamb of God fills it with unfading glory. O blessed and much to be desired city! Who that contrasts it with this region of sin and doubt and suffering, does not long to pass from the one to the other, and is not constrained to exclaim like one of old, "Oh! that I had wings like a dove! then would I flee away and be at rest in that glorious abode for ever."

III. Believers are next said to come "to an innumerable company of angels." Now they are united to those happy beings by the faith of the Gospel: hereafter they will associate with them face to face. Believers below and angels above constitute but one family. They are all fellow citizens and fellow subjects, and all one body, of which Christ is the head. Angels, though they do not at present familiarly converse with us as they shall do when this "mortal shall have put on immortality," are yet very near us, having a special love for us, exercising a watchful care over us, and constantly ministering to us as "the heirs of salvation." They have ever taken a vast interest in the blessed scheme of man's redemption. When the only-begotten One, the author and finisher of the glorious plan, was brought into this our world, all these morning stars sang together, and all these sons of God shouted for joy. They attended Him in the hour of His fierce temptation by the prince of darkness. They sought to sustain and cheer Him in the sore agony and bloody sweat of Gethsemane. They kept watch over His body as it slumbered in the silent sepulchre, and they rolled away the stone from its mouth, when the brief empire of death was passed, and beheld Him rise the conqueror's conqueror, that He might "open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." And in all those of mankind, who avail themselves of this finished work of the Saviour, they take a corresponding interest, as in those of whom He shall see of the travail of His soul, and who shall multiply the jewels of His diadem, and increase the luster of His renown. They love them as brethren, who are like themselves the heirs of glory; and so great is their desire to add to the number of such as shall be saved, that whenever a poor transgressor, smitten with a sense of his lost and miserable state, comes with a broken heart to seek mercy through the merits of the cross, and is thereby translated to the happy fold that shall enjoy their blessed society for ever, they are filled with increased rapture on the occasion, and they make the heaven of heavens to ring with louder songs of praise, for "there is," we are assured, "joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Every such an one belongs thenceforward to their innumerable company, being identified with them in hopes and prospects, and receiving the benefits of their special love and care while here on earth, and is destined ere long to be introduced to their visible presence in heaven, to enjoy their unalloyed delights, and to share their unfading glories throughout the days of an unchanging eternity.

IV. Believers are further said to have come "to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven;"—to which "are added the spirits of just men made perfect." They now belong "to the general assembly and church of the first-born;" that is, they are of the number of those who are born again, and whose spiritual birth entitles them to a heavenly inheritance. The first-born under the law had a right to a double share of the inheritance. So they who are born of the Spirit are destined to a far larger share of happiness than any of God's earthly creatures. They are the subjects of a nobler

birth, and they are the heirs of a more exalted inheritance, even the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Presently they will take actual possession of that inheritance, and then all drawbacks on their happiness, all imperfections in their characters and enjoyments will be at an end. They will join the ranks and assume all the privileges of the "spirits of just men made perfect." Their race will be consummated, their deliverance complete, their reward full, their faith heightened into sight, and their graces elevated into glory. They will be exempted from every source of disquietude and alarm. No pain shall mingle with their pleasure; no enemy shall interfere with their peace; no fear or want shall cause them one moment of uneasiness—but all around them and within them will be sweetness to the taste, music to the ear, beauty to the eye, rapture to the heart without mixture, without interruption and without end.

To join the innumerable company of angels is of itself a glorious privilege, and a noble object of ambition. But to join the spirits of just men made perfect is a condition which seems to us with our present hopes and fears to be more sympathetically and interestingly attractive. For we are thereby reminded that we shall not only ourselves be free from every imperfection, but that we shall also meet again in that happy state those beloved ones whose departure before us into the world of spirits had riven our hearts with grief. And that doubtless will be one of the sweetest ingredients in our cup of happiness. Some indeed may object and say, 'If in that world of joy, all local prejudices and all temporary prepossessions shall be no more, will not every attachment to those who have been our dearest friends and relatives be absorbed in that universal sympathy which must pervade those happy regions? If it be those who love God that we shall love, and all around us shall love Him with all their heart, why should we not love them all equally? What can alter the degree of our affection, when the ground of it is the same?' I answer, gratitude. It was you, my father, says one; it was you, my mother, says another; it was you, my brother, sister, dear relative, or disinterested benefactor, says another, that was the instrument of bringing me to this world of bliss. It was you, the guardian of my early years, who instilled into my mind the counsels of heavenly wisdom and the lessons of everlasting truth. It was you, the friend of my soul, who brought me to Jesus, and taught me to lay hold of the glorious hope set before me in His glorious Gospel. And to meet you here, where we shall part no more—oh! it enhances the brightness of this glorious place, and causes to overflow my already full cup of joy. Will it be thus, my friends, in that city of God? Shall we there be again united to those with whom we took sweet counsel here, and with whom we mingled the song of redeeming love in this the house of our pilgrimage? Should not the thought at once impel us to improve every opportunity of pious communion now, and soothe the pangs of grief when that communion shall be interrupted by death? It is indeed painful to look into the grave of one we love. Nature cannot but melt within us at the gloomy sight. But methinks it should dry the tears of the bereaved parent or the forsaken child, to believe that, though they have lost the one the guide of his youth, and the other the staff of his declining age, they shall one day be restored to each other's arms never to be separated more, and that their steps, though solitary now, are perpetually drawing nearer and nearer to the land of everlasting friendship and indissoluble love. After having been tossed on this tempestuous ocean, with all we love apparently swallowed up in its dark abyss, for the parent to meet his long lost child, the widow to be given back to the partner of her soul, brothers to brothers, and friends to friends—to find themselves again in possession of all their hearts held dear, and on that peaceful shore too, where no

storms can ever arise, but all is perfect peace and perfect joy—what language can paint the exquisite happiness of a scene like this? What shall melt the heart to penitence and love like a hope such as this? What is more fitted to bring you into the obedience of Christ than a prospect such as this? Oh! the blindness and perverseness not to cultivate with all the faculties of the soul the fellowship that shall be perpetuated thus! Oh! the wretched short-sightedness and miserable worldliness that can for a moment turn aside from a consummation such as this, and endanger the accomplishment of such a reunion as this! Let imagination range through the social periods of your life. Recall the memory of those with whom you have passed many days and years in the pleasing intercourse of affection. You who have known what it is to bow beneath the heaviest stroke of heaven, think of those who loved you with a love that no time or distance could efface, but whose memory is all the treasure that is left you to cherish now. Do they not, though dead, still speak unto you? Hear you not a voice from the tomb calling you to seek the seats of the blessed? See you not a hand from the grave beckoning you to the shore of eternal glory? It is the summons of a father, mother, brother, sister, the child of your hopes, the partner of your cares, or the friend of your heart, whose dust you honor, and over whose grave you have often wept. Who shall not respond to the call? Who shall not strive to ascend the hill of the Lord, and to enter the city of the living God? Who shall not make it his daily prayer and care to be united to the “innumerable company of angels and to the spirits of just men made perfect?”

V. But we have not yet done with the noble privileges and exalted enjoyments of the saints. “They are come to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” This, like some preceding parts of the text, refers both to the church on earth and to the church in heaven. Through the intercession of Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant, believers are able here to approach the Judge of all without terror. It was not so under the old covenant of Sinai. That said, “Do this and live,” and denounced vengeance upon “every one that continued not in all things that were written in the book the law to do them.” But here, under the Gospel, is a more merciful arrangement. Here is an ample atonement for transgression, crying out, “Deliver from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom.” Here is the blood of sprinkling to save the first-born from death. Better than the blood, which was sprinkled on the lintel and the door-posts of the houses of Israel, to save their first-born from the death inflicted on the Egyptians, here is the “blood of Jesus Christ which cleanseth from all sin,” and which, sprinkled by faith on our guilty conscience, will scatter all our fears, and enable us to stand with confidence of acquittal before the Judge of all. If we are among the regenerate or the first-born of God, His blood will rescue us from the wrath of heaven, and save us from eternal death. Here is a blood “that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” Whether we understand, as some do, by the blood of Abel, the blood of the beasts which he offered in sacrifice, and with which the blood of beasts shed under the Mosaic law was identified; or whether we understand, as others do, by the blood of Abel, the blood which flowed from his body under the murderous hands of Cain, the blood of Christ speaketh far better things than either. It speaketh better things than the blood of the ceremonial sacrifice offered by Abel and his imitators. That was only the shadow of the real atoning stream, and “could never of itself take away sins, and make the comers thereunto perfect” as to pardon for the past, peace for the present, or hope for the future. But this speaks direct consolation to the broken heart, and says with positive

assurance to the heavy-laden sinner, "Thy sins and iniquities shall be remembered no more."

"Not all the blood of beasts,  
On Jewish altars slain,  
Could give the guilty conscience peace,  
Or wash away the stain.

But Christ the heavenly Lamb,  
Takes all our sins away;  
A sacrifice of nobler name,  
And higher worth than they."

Or to take the expression in another sense, "the blood of Christ speaketh better things than the blood of Abel" shed by Cain. That cried out to God for vengeance. This crieth out to God for mercy. This pleaded for pardon on behalf of those, by whose hands it was actually shed, and succeeded in bringing many of them to repentance and salvation; and it pleads with God on behalf of every believer, rescues him from wrath and condemnation, and ensures him an acquittal before the Judge of all. By virtue of the great intercession and atonement, which by faith he has approached, the Judge of all is become his friend, and will not only release him from every charge of the Divine law, but will judge all those who slander and persecute him, and will "bring forth His judgment as the light, and His righteousness as the noon-day."

These noble privileges of the believers on earth will issue in the most exalted enjoyments in heaven. These, having been already cleansed by the blood of sprinkling from everything that defileth and separateth the soul from God, they will come into immediate converse with the Judge of all, and with Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. And what a deluge of pleasure will overflow their hearts, when at last they open their eyes to the clear discoveries of the glorious perfections of God! Here He grants them the comforts of His grace, and the earnestness of His love. But there He spreads before them all the bright treasures of His wisdom, all the beauties of His holiness, all the glories of His power, and all the riches of His inexhaustible goodness, and will say unto them, all these things are yours, to contemplate and to enjoy for ever and ever. And who can tell the raptures of the believer's soul, when he shall see "Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant," face to face! If faith and love of an unseen Saviour sometimes produce "a joy unspeakable and full of glory," as though the heart were wrapt to paradise, what must the effect be of actually beholding His person, and constantly enjoying His presence! 'Blessed Redeemer,' will the glorified saint exclaim, 'What do I not owe to thee, and how it crowns all my joy to be thus admitted to pour forth the tribute of my grateful heart in Thy immediate presence! I was once poor, blind, and naked, but Thou hast brought me into marvellous light, and clothed me with a rich robe of righteousness. I was once under the tyranny of Satan, and doomed to darkness and despair, but Thou hast bruised him under my feet, and brought me into this delightful region of Bliss and glory. What tongue can express my gratitude to Thee for such marvellous loving-kindness! What love can equal mine for Thee who art "the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely!" "Worthy art Thou to receive glory and honour and blessing and praise for ever and ever."'

And now the rest and happiness of the saints are complete. They are come to "the innumerable company of angels in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant," and they themselves are become "spirits made perfect." And how sweet are their enjoyments, and how delightful their discourses! With what overflowing gratitude do they recount

the wonders of their destiny and habitation ! How joyfully they concur in thanksgiving to God for all His marvellous goodness ; for His creation of them to be reasonable beings, capable of this fulness of joy ; for His preservation of them through all the perils and temptations of a fallen nature and a sinful world ; but, above all, for His redemption of them by so costly a sacrifice, to be vessels of honour in His immortal presence ! The cherubim and seraphim join in the song of praise, and the innumerable company of angels prolong the rapturous strain. And all the hosts of heaven casting their crowns in delighted homage before the throne, exclaim, " Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is, and is to come. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power ; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

Oh ! the unspeakable pleasure of this concert of heaven ! Could we hear but some echo of these hymns of praise and songs of redemption, we should long to join that blessed company. Could we anticipate, by the exercise of constant faith and habitual contemplation, that glorious reward which remaineth for the righteous, we should not be so attached to the pleasures, and so engrossed by the occupations of this unsatisfactory and evanescent world. Pray ye, then, beloved, that your "affections may be" continually "set on things above," and ye shall not be overcome of evil, or borne down by sorrow. What though Satan surround you with all his allurements ? ye can resist them without difficulty, when ye think of the sublime felicities of heaven. What though trouble and disappointment be your lot, ye can regard them as "a light affliction," when ye meditate on the eternal "weight of glory." What though the recollection of past sin sometimes clouds your spirits, ye can be at peace, as ye think of the "blood of sprinkling." What though death has desolated your homes, and carried away your best beloved ones, oh ! ye can find ample consolation in the hope of meeting them again among the heirs of God. "Set your affections, then, on things above," and nothing can harm you, or make you miserable. Precious is the hope set before you in the Gospel. Safe is your condition, if born of the Spirit. Joyous your prospect, if believers in Christ. "For ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel."



## THE UNIVERSAL SENTENCE.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. HENRY CHRISTMAS, M.A., F.R.S., F.S.A.

PREACHED IN VERULAM EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, LAMBETH,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, AUGUST 8, 1847.

*"For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."*—Genesis iii. 19.

THE awful and universal importance of the sentence that is gone out against all mankind, a sentence which admits of no commutation, and from which no man can escape, renders even the minutest circumstances connected with its passing interesting in the highest degree. The first four chapters of the book of Genesis abound, perhaps, more than any other part of the Divine oracles in matter for curious speculation; and though such speculation may for the most part be more pleasant than profitable, yet the events alluded to in the text are so dreadful in their nature and so universal in their consequences, that we feel we shall hardly have obeyed our Lord's command, "Search the Scriptures," unless we bestow upon *them* a little of our attention.

In calling your thoughts to the certainty of death, we shall, therefore, first, consider how death came into this world; we shall speak of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil," the eating of whose fruit gave it immediate entrance, and of "the tree of life," by the shutting up of which the awful sentence has been carried into execution. These reflections will lead us, if the Lord permit, to apply to ourselves the words of inspiration. And may we be "so taught to number our days, as to apply our hearts unto wisdom!"

Among that multitude of trees which were "pleasant to the eye and good for food," which adorned the terrestrial paradise prepared for man's abode, were two of a more mysterious nature—two which were to be the instruments—one of man's trial, the other of his reward—the "tree of knowledge," and the "tree of life." The "tree of knowledge of good and evil" was the one whose fruit was prohibited to man. Of its nature we can know but very little; there appears, however, to have been nothing in its qualities capable of causing death, but that punishment was brought upon man by other and independent means. It has been ingeniously remarked, that the tree was so called because by the eating thereof Adam should know what good he had lost and what evil he had brought upon himself; we must, however be permitted to think, that the fruit of this tree had some illuminating effect upon the mind, and that the words of the serpent were in some respects true—"Behold, ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." It is possible that some mysteries of iniquity before unknown and unattainable might have been revealed to the transgressor; it is possible that demons might have been then permitted to make man a partaker of their fearful secrets; but whatever was the operation of the fruit, we know but too well what were the effects of eating it—even the expulsion of Adam from Paradise, and the shutting up for ever of the tree of life. Of this latter we are enabled to speak with a greater

probability of truth; for although we are nowhere told why the tree of life was planted on the earth, we yet learn so much incidentally of its nature and properties that we need scarcely entertain a doubt upon the subject. Towards the close of the chapter from which we have selected our text we find these words: "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." The former part of this passage would have been more exactly translated had it run thus: "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man who was as one of us, knoweth now not only good, but also evil." And with regard to the latter part we may observe, that it was an act of mercy on the part of the Lord, to prevent man from living for ever on earth in a fallen state.

We now come to consider the circumstance that the sentence of death was carried into execution, not by the immediate destruction of our first parents, but simply by closing against them the way to the tree of life. From this we learn, that even in his unfallen state the body which was framed of the dust of the earth was of a decaying nature, and that the use of this tree was to recruit that spirit of vitality by which it was to be supported in perpetual youth and vigour. It would have remained free from other diseases, and would probably have been incapable of death; but it would seem that the approach of old age would have become manifest; the eye would have become dim and the ear dull, the pulse faint and the strength exhausted, if not refreshed from time to time by the use of this wonderful tree. From the length of life enjoyed by the antediluvians, we find that old age did not approach them till at least seven centuries had passed over their heads, and that the span of their existence bordered on a thousand years. How this came to be gradually shortened, we shall on another occasion examine; suffice it here to remark, that by such a dispensation as thus debarring the life-giving fruit from man, the mercy of the Lord was wonderfully displayed; because by death alone could man, now fallen, be readmitted into the presence and favour of God.

But let us for a moment suppose that man still had access to this tree, the consequences would to the human race at large be truly awful. When the earth was cursed for the sin of man, a limit was put to its produce; and it is only by the regular removal in due order of every human being that its productions can be made to suffice for the living. Let us but look at the privations to which the poor are often subjected during seasons of temporary distress—the effects of a scarcity of work or of a decrease of wages—of a scanty harvest or a severe winter—let us look at the effects of these things, and consider what would be the effect if for one person there were tens of thousands, and for one city there were thousands. Imagination can hardly conceive the horrible misery of such a state as this. If to those who ate of the tree of life a violent death were possible, we should see the human race, not metaphorically, but literally, preying on each other like the beasts of the forest; and if such a death were not possible, destruction, swift destruction, would be prayed for by whole nations as a boon, and earth would exhibit scenes such as can only be pictured by those to whom the horrors of hell are known.

But, besides this, it was the declared intention of the Almighty, to put a final end to the now corrupted world—to remove man from its precincts—and to place him, through the atonement of Jesus Christ, in a brighter and more enduring paradise than that which he had lost. Now this was done without a miracle by the means we have mentioned. Deprived of the means of con-

tinuing life to an indefinite extent, death intervened when the constitution of man gave way, and the sentence, however long delayed, was thus carried into effect.

We shall not now pause to speak of the future glories of the tree of life, whose fruit shall be of twelve kinds, and whose "leaves shall be for the healing of the nations," but rather proceed to consider how this awful certainty of death affects us, and inquire, what fruits does it produce in our life?

Let us place ourselves, as it were, upon a tower, and take a glance at the hearts of men; and though we cannot uncover the secret intents of individuals, we may yet figure to ourselves such persons as shall serve as representatives of the rest. The first, and perhaps the most remarkable observation which we shall make, is that of the multitude hurrying along before us, all tending to the same goal and all pressing forwards towards the entrance of the dark "valley of the shadow of death." There is scarcely one whose thoughts are turned to the hour of his departure. It matters but little whether the sun be shining above them and the landscape smiling around them, or whether they are holding on their way through storms and amongst barren wilds—the present, and the *uncertain* future—the space of time that shall elapse before death hurries them away, are the sole objects of their care; for this short and uncertain future are they laying up stores; in it they look for success, and honour, and "troops of friends." All who are not like themselves, anxious and concerned on this account, they consider as idle and utterly improvident—alas! unconscious that their own conduct is incalculably more improvident! The man who lives only for the present may be, and justly is, accused of want of prudence—but he does at least catch the moments as they fly, and endeavour to enjoy them; the man who without respect to a better world is toiling to lay up riches for this, is the most unreasonable as well as the most self-denying of mankind—he is refusing the pleasures of this world, and at the same time renouncing the hopes of a better. We would not condemn—nay, we would earnestly enjoin—diligence in business; but we would say, let it be accompanied by fervency of spirit in the fear of the Lord.

But from the crowds sweeping by us, let us single out a few instances for our improvement. See, then, that man upon whose brow time has already written premature wrinkles; he has been all his life the votary of ambition. For the rewards that she held out to him, has he risen up early and late taken rest. He has renounced the quiet of domestic life, and worn out all the best faculties of his mind in subordinate offices; yet step by step has he advanced up the glittering ladder; his renown has reached the ears of princes, and courts behold him with interest. And now he has attained the high point he proposed to himself; the brilliancy of his talents and the soundness of his judgment are the theme of universal praise, and the destinies of nations are committed to his care. Let us, then, behold the successful statesman. Honour and power are indeed his—but what is the price he has paid for them? His whole previous career has been but a prelude to the grand act that is now to begin—but alas! where are the health, the spirits, the indomitable energy of youth, which he now, more than ever, needs? The eye that once flashed indignant defiance on his adversaries is becoming dim; the voice that once thundered forth to astonished senates the dictates of mental power, or held them enchained by the silver fetters of persuasive wisdom is, alas! somewhat shorn of its strength; the whitening hair and the decreasing strength are all warnings of the approaching change. Yet is the mind of that man fixed upon a temporal future; he looks forward to a long enjoyment of the power and influence he has reached; and though the hurry in which he has been living, the whirl of incessant business devolving upon him, has left

him no leisure to prepare for eternity, though his sins are unrepented and his soul unredeemed, he is still putting off to "a more convenient season" the considerations of religion. But though repentance and faith may be deferred, death will not. The stream of our life is bearing us ever onward; steadily and rapidly are we moving down the current; and while we amuse our eyes with the objects on either shore, while, lost in wonder at the bright meadows and deep forests through which we pass, we neglect the guidance of our bark, there rises suddenly before us, stern and black, in the midst of the torrent, the rock upon which we are about to strike. A few vain but bitter lamentations may escape us, as it grows darker and nearer—till at length comes the final crash, and all is over!

Let us turn our eyes once more to the man whom all esteem so fortunate—the man whom the sovereign delighteth to honour. In the silence of his retirement he reviews his past life; he feels that the hour is fast coming, when he must appear in the presence of God. It may be that he looks back to the piety of his parents, and their anxiety to train him up in the fear of the Lord; it may be that he contemplates the humbler but happier fate of some once dear companion of his childhood, and exclaims in the bitterness of a too late repentance, 'Oh! had I to live again, how would I seek contentment in the paths of virtue and religion! how willingly would I renounce all the gorgeous hopes which I have but now realised!—now, that they can only mock the last hours of life!' But to be convinced that we have "spent our labour for that which is not bread, and our strength for that which satisfieth not," will not recall the past and give us again a choice of good and evil. Oh! in that solemn hour when the spirit is about to quit the tabernacle in which it has so long dwelt, and which has become so dear to it; when the time for repentance is past, and no preparation has been made for the awful transit from one world to another, what are the pomp, the glory, the riches of this world? How willingly would the possessor give them all up for a few months' nay, a few days' life! No matter how mean the station, no matter how few the conveniences; what are perils and hunger and thirst and nakedness and sickness, ay, all that this world can heap upon the head of the most miserable, compared to the flames of hell? But we will finish the picture, and follow the long and magnificent procession which escorts the statesman to his last abode. Are those sable plumes, those floating banners, that wearisome parade of mourning, any satisfaction to the parted spirit? Shall the statue erected to his memory, the eulogium pronounced on his career, compensate the loss of God's approbation? Alas! the question needs no answer; it is but putting in another form the awful query of our Lord, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

The portrait we have drawn is indeed drawn from imagination; and it may be said, 'If the circumstances thus represented are not matters of fact, why bring them forward at all? and, especially, why produce them as a warning to those who neither are nor can be in such circumstances?' We reply, such things are continually occurring; and if the instance we have imagined be too lofty for a general example, it will not be the less useful to show that no advantages are of any real value that do not tend to advance us in our way heavenward. But we will take an instance from real life; we will show you a man whose intellectual power made him the most conspicuous character of his age. He was of humble origin, but the splendour of his genius could take no additional lustre from any adventitious circumstance; he had but to speak, and even the most eloquent were silent in attention; he had but to write, and thousands revered his dictate as an oracle. He moved about from one court to another like an independent sovereign. Wealth, honour, long life, influence

more extensive than any man of his time—all were his; and how did he employ these advantages? He taught the people to despise their Saviour and to disobey their king, to disbelieve their Bible and dishonour their rulers; and while he built a church in which what he called a God was to be worshipped with what he called religion, he yet laughed to scorn the Word of Inspiration, and held up to open ridicule the scheme of Christianity. But what was the end thereof? When the time came that he should give an account of his stewardship, then came the agony of late remorse and unavailing repentance; then the veil of the future was withdrawn, and the eye of the mind beheld that retribution which the anger of God hath prepared.

We will not repeat the horrors which are related to have attended the death of a Voltaire, but we will turn to the delightful task of showing how death hath been robbed of his sting, and the grave of his victory. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Yea, for as death came through the sin of Adam, so "it behoved Christ to suffer," that this sin should no longer lie upon us, but being delivered from the guilt both of original and actual sin we might have peace with God. He, too, was laid in the tomb—He who had shown His power over death by restoring to life those who had already been his victims. He was wrapped round with graveclothes, and a watch was set over Him; but, as "the first-born of many brethren," as the Captain of salvation to as many as either did or should believe on His name, did He call around Him the angelic hosts of His heavenly kingdom; and while the earthquake and the thunders and the lightnings dazzled the eyes and astounded the minds of the guard, was the stone rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre, and the glorified Saviour ascended to God the Father. What further confirmation was needed to the faith of His disciples than the evidence of this resurrection? What further proof, that whosoever suffered with Him, whosoever in the faith of his name passed away from this life, should, like Him, be raised in glory?

And in what light is death now to be regarded? To the unbelievers, as indeed the "king of terrors;" they have supplied him with the horrors which attend him, they have enveloped him in clouds, and then tremble at the work of their own hands. But is this grisly phantom, that cannot be contemplated without a shudder, the true picture of death? What is it but the departure into another world? And though the very thought be more solemn than aught beside, still when eternal life is secure, and when heaven is promised through the merits of the Lord, there can be no terror in death to the Christian. Moses, when he looked from Mount Pisgah, saw with delight that fair land which the children of Israel were about to possess; and though when he ascended the mountain, and looked from time to time on the glorious prospect, as he paused to rest on his way, he might feel some natural sorrow at being forbidden to enter with them, yet when he came to the summit and beheld it in all its magnificence, and then looked through the gates of death that were already open to receive him, his desire to remain was past, and he longed to depart. On the one hand he saw the loveliest of earthly lands, on the other the forms of cherubim and seraphim, brighter and more mighty as they stood nearer the great white throne, till their glory was lost in its insufferable splendour. Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the patriarchs of the earlier world, stood at the portal to welcome him; and what to him, though his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated, was all the earth could offer? What, in times long subsequent, to the hoary Simeon, when exclaiming, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation?" We find a Stephen beholding in his last moments "the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God;" we

find a Paul declaring, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory, which God, the righteous Judge, shall give me."

These are instances taken from the records of ages long past; but with God is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." We might refer you to the annals of the Church, and show you, in all ages, the men who have cheerfully laid down their lives as witnesses of the faith. There was a time when persecution was strong, and walked the earth with a scourge of iron; when bigotry prepared the stake, and glared with fiendish exultation on the devouring flames; yet then was the spirit of the martyr upheld by a support which had no earthly source, and he beheld with the eye of faith the chariot and horses of fire waiting to convey him into the presence of an approving Deity. Let us ask that father, who, with a countenance of chastened grief, bows to the dispensation of Divine Providence, what is his hope now that his beloved child is taken from his side? Oh! the stroke has been hard to bear! and at times when the vacant place by the fire-side, the melancholy silence, or the white stone but newly added to the memorials in the churchyard, remind him of all that he has lost, he feels how difficult it is to say, "Thy will be done;" but the death of his child was cheered by a bright hope of immortality—a hope not founded on ignorance, but on the testimony of Scripture. The dying smile of the youthful saint still rests, and will so long as he lives rest in his remembrance; it supported him when those dear remains were committed to the earth, and it will encourage him to trust in the same God, to expect and to seek the same consolation, when the period of his own departure shall come.

Tell me not that a scene like this is fanciful: it is, blessed be God, one which takes place every day. And where is the man who does not say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?" "For dust thou art," saith the Lord, "and unto dust shalt thou return." Yet shall there come a day, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, when the dust, however scattered, shall be reassembled; when the body, which had been laid in the grave a "natural body," shall be raised a "spiritual body." It is not our purpose now to comment on these words; we adduce them but as one passage out of many, to show that death is important—because "after death, the judgment." In that most wonderful revelation made to St. John we hear: "And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come, and see. And I looked, and beheld a pale horse, and his name that sat on him was death and hell"—that is, the invisible world followed him. Of that invisible world, and the intermediate state between death and judgment, it is but little that we know; the day of the Lord's second coming is the period to which the Christian should look with hope and strong faith; for then shall all mysteries be revealed, the kingdom of heaven shall be opened, all the saints shall enter into glory at the resurrection of the body, and the Lord shall reign for ever and ever.

So, then, death is ordained by the mercy of God to be the entrance into a happier life. The sorrows of this world shall be laid aside, and the spirit shall rejoice in hope till the great day of resurrection. The body is to return to the dust, only that it may be raised again free from all taint of earthliness, clothed with glory and everlasting beauty; and the man, now restored to more than his original excellence, shall be perfect in holiness. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

GOD A WONDROUSLY DEALING GOD.

## A Harvest Thanksgiving Sermon,

REV. ROBERT JONES, B.A.

PREACHED IN ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, ROTHERHITHE,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 5, 1847.

*"I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, My great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you : and My people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else : and My people shall never be ashamed."*—Joel ii. 25—27.

GOD a wondrously dealing God—that, brethren, is our subject this morning. Oh ! may He enable us by His Spirit to regard Him as such ! and more—may we feel Him to be a God dealing wondrously with us !

I. The text brings before us, first, *the judgments of the Lord*. And in these He shows Himself not only "wonderful in all His ways," but "holy in all His works."

Canaan was of all countries the most favoured in temporal blessings. It is described by God himself as a "land flowing with milk and honey ;" and rich in corn and wine and oil. It is exalted above all lands in His estimation. When He speaks of it, He calls it "a good land, a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates ; a land of oil-olive, and honey ; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it ; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass."

It was the land, too, of spiritual blessings. God was known in its palaces as a refuge. There His temple was built ; there rested the ark and the mercy-seat ; there the shechinah, the bright symbol of His presence, shone forth ; there He met His beloved Israel, made known to them His perfections, instructed them, and blessed them. Of all lands, we should have said, this is the last He will visit with judgments. But no. God, brethren, is a wondrously dealing God, and He will be acknowledged as such even in these. His people have sinned against Him ; and therefore He will hide His face and visit them with affliction. He spoils their land of its beauty. He turns it and its glory into a scene of desolation. Drought, and barrenness, and the devouring insect do the work, and so completely that "the like was not seen in their days, or even in the days of their fathers." That which the palmerworm left, the locust ate ; that which the locust left, the cankerworm ate ; that which the cankerworm left, the caterpillar devoured ; so that "the beasts were groaning," says the prophet ; "the herds of cattle were perplexed, because they had no pasture ; yea, the flocks of sheep were made desolate."

And looking back a few months, brethren, cannot we recall to our memories something like this? Beautiful as England is, and rich, and fertile, with the glory of God resting on her temples, and salvation resounding within her gates, hunger and famine had nearly laid her low! As in the days of the prophet, "the meat was cut off before our eyes, and joy and gladness from the house of our God." Yea, so deeply were we afflicted, that, like Israel of old, "we sanctified a fast, we called a solemn assembly, we gathered the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord our God, and cried unto the Lord."

See then, brethren, that neither the fruitfulness of a land, nor the wealth of its inhabitants, nor the spiritual privileges that gladden it, will save it from judgments. When it pleases God to blast it with the breath of His displeasure, all its glory and privileges are as nothing. If His people sin against Him, however exalted they may be, and however dear to Him, He will "visit their sins with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes." Besides, judgments and afflictions are the means which God often employs to bring His wandering people back to Himself. Mercies fail to do it; blessings are powerless. When the sun shines, and the sky is bright, they forget their hiding-place. But the heaven lowers, the storm comes on, and they remember their forgotten home. The name of the Lord becomes once more as a strong tower; they "run into it, and are safe." Twice had Absalom sent for Joab, but Joab would not come to him. "Go," said he to his servants, "Joab's field is near, and he hath barley there; set it on fire." And what followed? Joab is immediately in the house and at the side of his friend. And so with us. God sends the fire into our corn; sends famine or sickness or death into our families, and we too are at His side; testifying by our presence there that He is indeed "a wondrously dealing God."

II. The next thing noticed in the text, is *the apparently powerless instruments God employs to bring His designs to pass*. Herein, too, He shows Himself a wondrously dealing God. What does He employ in this case? He tells us: "His great army." And nowhere does God speak of "His great army" save in the Scripture before us. And while we are looking upward to cherubim and seraphim, angel and archangel, and all the host of heaven, ranged phalanx upon phalanx deep, and assembled in myriads around their great Captain, He bids us look to the ground, points out to us the locust, the cankerworm, the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, and calls *them* His "great army"—creatures so small that we could tread a troop of them into dust—they are the host of His right hand.

And were not the means He employed to punish us of a similar kind? The food of a nation—that which constituted the chief support of our sister island—was destroyed, it is conjectured, by a tiny insect—the aphid; or if not by an insect, by something so incomprehensible, so inconceivable, that human skill and sagacity could not even detect it, much less find a remedy. The disease, if disease it was, baffled every effort.

And this is in accordance with God's usual method of wondrous dealing in our world. The haughty Herod, seated on a throne of royalty, and vaunting himself as a god, is not hurled to the ground by a thunderbolt, or stricken to death by a destroying angel: he is eaten up of worms.

And look at the host of Midian, as they were gathered against Israel. They were in number, we are told, as the grasshoppers. Gideon brings against them two-and-thirty-thousand of his men. But, 'This will not do for Me,' says God. 'If this multitude prevail, Israel will vaunt themselves against Me, and say, Mine own hand hath saved me.' He therefore bids Gideon disband his army, and send them away, reserving for the battle three hundred men.



only. And more—they are to engage the enemy without weapon of any kind. A pitcher with a lighted torch in it in one hand, and a trumpet in the other, are to be their only instruments. And with this handful of unarmed men Gideon is to attack the vast host of the Midianites. He divides his men into three companies of a hundred each; and placing himself at the head of one, he reaches the camp of the enemy about midnight. At a given signal Gideon's company sound their trumpets, break their pitchers, hold up their blazing torches, and shout, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," is echoed by the other companies, who also display their lights; and the vast host of Midian are confounded. Every man's sword is set against his fellow, and their destruction is complete—so complete that did the Lord threaten with His vengeance any guilty people, "I will do unto them," He says, "as I did unto Midian. I will make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, and their princes like Zeba and Salmunna."

Look again at the ocean when the storm rages. Wave succeeding wave lashes the shore, threatening in its fury to inundate and overwhelm the surrounding land. And yet God confines it to its place, not by barriers of iron, or rocks of brass, or chains of adamant, but by what has become proverbial among men for utter weakness—feters and ropes of sand.

And look again at the work of our redemption—of all God's dealings with us the noblest, the most stupendous, the most lasting. All earth was arrayed against Him, and all hell declared its rebellion. And yet the victory was achieved—achieved by One in human form, by One who called Himself "a worm and no man; the very scorn of men and the outcast of the people;" by One whom a prophet says the world "despised and rejected—a Man of sorrows;" by One whom the Jews taunted with inability to save Himself—a bruised, a bleeding, and a dying Nazarene!

And look once more at the wondrous dealing of God in the dispensations of His providence. When He has to punish, He makes use of instruments, though they may be small as the locust, for judgment He calls His strange work. But when He blesses, He makes use of none; that is His accustomed work; mercies are sent in the usual course of His providence. Our threatened famine has been removed. But how? We scarcely know. God has not bared His arm—mighty instruments have not effected it. It has been wrought without effort—without any visible putting forth of His power. And yet we are at this moment rejoicing in the light of His countenance.

And see, brethren, how careful God is to be acknowledged in all these things. Although He works by instruments and means, He will make it clearly understood that they are but instruments and means in His hand. In Israel's case, devouring insects wrought the desolation; but who sent them? whose army were they? He tells us. "The locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, *My* great army, which *I* sent among you; *I*, your wondrously dealing God."

III. We have, thirdly, in the text, *the restoration to God's people of their forfeited blessings*. "I will restore to you," He says, "the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, *My* great army which *I* sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied."

The judgments of God having done their work, and His Israel brought back to Himself, their former abundance and wealth shall be restored to them. God, brethren, never afflicts beyond the necessity of the case; the instant judgments have accomplished His designs, they are withdrawn. He is described by Malachi as watching His people, just as a refiner and purifier of silver watches the metal in his furnace, so that when the process is completed,

and His work upon them done, He may snatch them from suffering, and restore them to joy. And so here. Famine and the locust having effected His purpose, Canaan becomes once more a fruitful and a rejoicing land. The forests of its Carmel and the heights of its Lebanon are green with luxuriance and vegetation. Its vallies are waving with corn. From Dan even to Beersheba, the floors are described as "full of wheat, and the fats as overflowing with wine and oil."

"And they shall eat." He will satisfy all their need. No good thing shall be withheld from them. Even their hearts' desire shall be accomplished. "They shall eat in plenty and be satisfied." The God of their fathers shows Himself once more as their covenant-keeping, merciful, and wondrously dealing God.

And can we not find a scene similar to this? Will not our own land present it? How richly—how bountifully has England been blessed of God! We had a genial seed-time, followed by warm suns and refreshing showers. A few weeks rolled on, and our hills were luxuriant with verdure, and our vallies overflowing with corn. Then came the glorious harvest time, with its golden sheaves, and rejoicing husbandmen, and busy labourers, and stirring scenes; wains laden with wheat and barley groaning homewards; gleaners plying their busy task in the field; and barnyards replete with produce. And look at us now. We have our granaries filled to the full with corn: and more; our country is being enriched with the harvests of the world. Ships from many a distant nation are freighted with food for our shores, and bearing it over the waves for our use. And where are the dearth and scarcity that afflicted us now? A short while ago, had any one foretold our present abundance, our language to him would have been, "Away, thou dreamer." Like the lord who doubted the word of the prophet Elisha when he predicted cheapness and plenty in Samaria, we might well have asked, "Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" But it has come to pass; cheapness and plenty are gladdening every corner of our land—an abundance commensurate with our utmost wishes. Had the promise made to Israel been given to ourselves, it could not have been more literally fulfilled. God has indeed restored to us the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, His great army which He sent among us; and He has given us to eat in plenty, and satisfied our utmost desires. Is He not, brethren, a wondrously dealing God?

IV. And now comes, lastly, *the end these multiplied blessings were designed to answer*. They were to bring fresh glory to Jehovah's name, and to draw forth new and adoring thanksgivings from His people. "Ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and My people shall never be ashamed."

And loud indeed must have been their songs of thanksgiving, as they witnessed the promised abundance, the anger of the Lord turned away, and themselves restored to His loving-kindness and favour. And as their hearts glowed with gratitude, how vividly would their memories recur to the past! They would look upon God as their own God, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob; the God who had chosen them for Himself, and who through successive generations had blessed them and kept them as the apple of His eye, suffering none to do them harm, and even in His anger remembering mercy.

And were not their present blessings pledges also of future mercy? He who had done so much for them, would He not still pour upon them the riches of His grace? still bless, preserve, and keep them? They could not doubt it, for such was His promise: "Ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied,

and call upon the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you ; and My people shall *never* be ashamed."

Yes, brethren, the result of all these glorious blessings was to be a life of more earnest devotion and fervour in the service of their God. They were to praise His name, and He to succour and bless them with His abiding presence. They were to have a more exalted knowledge of Him, and a more heartfelt acquaintance with His glory and perfections. And this their honourable state was to be a permanent and a lasting one : "And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else ; and My people shall never be ashamed."

And now, brethren, let us turn to ourselves. "To your own tents, O Israel." The blessings the text speaks of are ours, and ours in the richest abundance. A rejoicing people testify to their presence. But, dear brethren, with the blessings is the thankfulness ours ? are our feelings of joy feelings of adoring gratefulness ? "What shall I render unto the Lord," says David, "for all His benefits toward me ?" "I will call upon the name of the Lord," is his reply ; "I will pay my vows unto the Lord now, in the presence of all His people ; in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem !"

Like David, then, "let us enter His gates with joy and His courts with praise." Let our gratitude incite us to something like an adoration commensurate with our blessings. Let it stir us up to a new and holier life—a life of renewed trust in God—and to a more implicit confidence in Him for the future. Dark as that future may be to some of us, if we are the people of God we need not fear its gloom. Leaning on Him, it shall eventually be changed into brightness. Let the blessings we have enjoyed in the past, and the mercies that have gladdened our path thus far, be to us as pledges of future loving-kindness and truth. "Because Thou hast been my help, therefore under the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice"—let that, dear brethren, be our constant "song in the house of our pilgrimage."

We are now celebrating the gathering in of the harvest. We are brought together more especially to declare our gratitude for it. And if you turn to the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus, you will find the Lord himself, by His servant Moses, instituting a feast for this very purpose. And it was to be one of the three great feasts, when all the Jews from every part of Canaan were to present themselves before the Lord. And these Jews were not to come empty-handed. They were to bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of their harvest unto the priest ; and the priest was to wave the sheaf before the Lord.

And let not *our* joy and rejoicing, brethren, be that of the lip only. Let it bring forth fruit to the glory of God. Let us show by acts of devotion and self-denial that "freely as we have received," we are also willing "freely to give." Let us make an offering of the first-fruits of *our* harvest. Let us present our sheaf unto the Lord. But on this point I had rather not say more ; save that, unless it is presented with a heart alive to its mercies—a thankful and adoring heart—withhold your hand. Let the offerings of gratitude alone be dedicated on this day.

But, brethren, whilst we forget not our temporal mercies, let us worship God with warmer hearts and louder tongues for spiritual blessings ! Wondrously as He has dealt with us in the former case ; He is a still more wondrously dealing God in the latter. We are in the midst of a glorious spiritual harvest ; hearing of and enjoying blessings that well might make an angel's heart to burn. We are offered, not the bread that perisheth, the food that is to nourish our mortal bodies—but the bread of life, the bread that came down from heaven, to gladden our immortal souls—offered it freely, "without

money and without price." Salvation—the treasures of salvation—are pressed upon our acceptance; all the riches of Christ, and all the joys of His kingdom; mercy and pardon, grace and holiness, glory and immortality are all our own, by simply stretching forth our unworthy hand to receive them. Who then, as he hears of such tidings as these, is not ready, like the leper of old, to fall down at the feet of his wondrously dealing God, "giving Him thanks?"

And let the commemoration of this earthly harvest remind us of that glorious time, when God shall gather together all the harvests of all His churches, and store them in His garner-house in heaven, without a tare among them, without a sin or a sorrow throughout all their multitude.

"When in the fulness of appointed time,  
Earth's every race shall flock from every clime!"

Oh! what a song of thanksgiving will then burst forth! what a thrill of wonder! The morning stars shall again sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy! And high above them all the redeemed, purified in the blood and clothed in the righteousness of Christ, shall begin their new song, which, waxing louder and louder, shall last long as eternity itself!

## THE GREAT TRUMPET.

### A Sermon,

REV. JOHN HUTTON CROWDER, M.A.

PREACHED IN ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, BLOOMSBURY,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 29, 1847.

*"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem."*—Isaiah xxvii. 13.

It is beautiful to trace, in many of these prophecies, the double application, to the first and second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The blessedness, so often and brilliantly portrayed, will indeed be seen in perfection only at the regeneration of all things, but it hath commenced its development *now*. Every heart, touched and transformed by God's converting wand, testifies to a happiness hitherto unknown; not to the "perfect day," but to the "shining light" which is its source and origin. The chapter before us is just one of those to which I allude. It primarily sets forth the glorious state of redeemed Israel in the ages to come—as at the sixth verse: "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root; Israel shall blossom and bud, and shall fill the world with fruit." It declares Jehovah's care for this His elect vineyard; its peace and prosperity, and the removal of all hindrances to their complete establishment. Then, we have the announcement of *their* gathering in, who have so long been stout against the Lord—the regrafting of the broken branches on to "their own olive tree." But, forasmuch as the preached Gospel is the only means of salvation for Jew or Gentile, we are at liberty to apply this verse of the text to its first publication in the world. At least, this interpretation has been judged admissible, nay, has been even held exclusively by many for whose zeal, piety, and love we must ever bless God.

In this light, then, I wish now, by the blessing of the same God, to consider the passage in your hearing; and first, see how a comparison of Scripture with Scripture will enable us to understand the word trumpet; secondly, I shall speak of the blowing of the trumpet; and thirdly, the results of that blowing: "they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem."

#### I. "The great trumpet shall be blown."

You know that legal ceremonies prefigured the spiritual doings of the Gospel. In the tenth chapter of Numbers, and the first verse, God commands Moses thus: "Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeyings of the camps." Also, in the fifth verse, for an alarm in case of an enemy's approach: also in the tenth verse, "in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and at the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt-offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace-offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God." In all this there is a secret allusion to the Gospel of the grace of God. Its use is emphatically that of the legal trumpets, namely, to summon men to hear matters connected with their weal, eternal weal; to warn them of spiritual armies, advancing to beset the unguarded avenues to their souls, as also to inspire joy and gladness, grounded, not on the slaying

of any "bulls and goats, which can never take away sin," but on His death who "once, at the end of the world, hath put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

The literal trumpets were to be made "*of one piece*." Here also there is a significance, such as the fashion of the Saviour's robe likewise implied; being "without seam, woven from the top throughout." The Bible, the Gospel, are without seam—"of one piece." Let blasphemers or erroneous interpreters say what they will, centuries of Christian experience and holiness have convincingly attested the intrinsic unity of the Gospel. In method, in character, in illustration, various are the writings in the Book of Life; but their design is one—"they are they which testify of Me." "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." You wander through those pleasant pastures, linger beside those still waters; and He is the genius of the place. Those diversified truths bear only one stamp, only one impression—the image and superscription of heaven's great Caesar.

Furthermore, the Gospel is one for a purpose; "that they all" who profess it "may be one"—"*of a whole piece*," like the trumpets. Discord ought not to be among you who acknowledge as your Head "the Prince of Peace."

My dear brethren, the great need of the church, and therefore what its members should make the subject of their chief prayers, is spiritual unity, formed by the love of Jesus in the heart. And we ministers, who stand in the forefront of the battle, must do our best to spread it, by "preaching unto you the whole counsel of God;" not a maimed and partial exhibition of the saving scheme, but such as Paul felt that he had delivered, when he told the Milesian elders in the twentieth chapter of the Acts, that "he had kept back nothing which was profitable" from them: or, when he said to the Corinthians (2 Cor. i. 18), "As God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay; for the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. For all the promises of God in Him are yea and Amen, unto the glory of God by us." The Gospel trumpet is therefore of one consistent harmonious piece.

But the trumpets called the people to the assemblies too. And even so, amid the dark desolate world—and specially, in this favoured island, many sanctuaries stand open wherein the trumpet of God sounds for this purpose, "the assembling of yourselves together"—not only of men's persons, (oh! little is gained by that alone,) but men's hearts; to gain their attention a little while, during a brief reprieve from the turmoil of business, the pursuit of fame, the fever of avaricious accumulation; to tell them that they have interests eternal, as well as temporal—souls, as well as bodies; that "it will profit a man" nought, "to gain the whole world, if he lose his soul"—that nevertheless, that soul *will* be lost, unless God's imploring overtures of mercy in Christ Jesus be accepted—that therefore "*now* is the accepted time, and now the day of salvation." Men and brethren, it is no light message which you have come to hear this morning. God has ordained nothing without good reason. Public worship was never sanctioned by Him, merely as an empty ceremony, as a decorous compliance with established custom. He ordained it for the saving of souls by the means of His *supreme* ordinance (at least if the Bible is to be the judge of what is *supreme*), His preached Word, and for the edification, by the continued application of it, of those whom it has softened. Oh! be *you* deeply sensible of these responsibilities; and remember that, by evading them, you are only stopping the current of a stream, which, in the end, will be too mighty for you; and, bursting its banks, will sweep away your hopes in one tremendous desolation!

And further, on this head, it is said in the eighth verse, "the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets" thus. For the more orderly ministration of the Word, God selects His own ambassadors to speak to men in His name. We, of course, are no priesthood, as were the sons of Aaron, all sacri-

fice being abolished by that of Jesus ; and we, consequently, having none to offer, but the spiritual ones of prayer and holiness. Our commission and credentials are to be in the highest sense of the word episcopal—conferred on us, not only by the temporal hands of man, but by “the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.” Every individual minister of our church asserts at ordination, that he is “moved by the Spirit of God to take upon him this office.” If he be, he will love to sound forth the sovereign name of Jesus. Behold the test of faithfulness ; and be sure, that this sound, so unpalatable to the world, the flesh and the devil, will never be awakened by those who have not purposed, by the grace of God, to forswear all three. And God’s command to ministers we have in the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah, and the first verse. “Cry aloud ! lift up thy voice like a trumpet ! and show My people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins.” We are not to be delicate : those whose wounds ministers salve over now, will curse *them* for it, when they meet together in the pit of destruction. We are not to *generalise*, but “to show My people their transgressions”—to single out individual sins, array them against the consciences of hearers, and then leave God the Spirit to conduct the application. Oh ! you can tell when the Gospel trumpet is faithfully blown. Whenever you see motion in cold dry bones of formalism—when there comes forth a living believer, walking in the ways of godliness, fruitful in every good work, crawling no longer in the chrysalis state of the earth-bound caterpillar, but spreading his soul’s radiant wings in the sunshine of his Father’s throne—when that man tells you that his change is to be dated from a season when he heard from the pulpit words of strange convincing power, detecting power, arresting power ; and, blessed be God, consoling power ;—why, then his state will be an index to its origin ; then you will confess that, whoever that minister has been, he has spoken faithfully, or God would not have blessed his words ; and that the Gospel trumpet has given no “uncertain sound,” or that poor sinner would never have “prepared himself for the battle,” and “gone forth more than conqueror through Him that loved him.” Where no such results consecrate a ministry, we may argue that something is wrong ; because God has sworn that He will answer the prayers of His faithful servants, and bless them with increase.

Again : this trumpet is marked by an exclusive title, “the great trumpet.” It is so in three respects :—

1. Its summons is all important. Man has many calls made upon him ; calls from pleasure—from ambition—from honour, falsely so called. Trumpets proclaiming all earth’s desirable things, sound in his ears : but this has to do with a sphere of possession on which they have never entered : it calls to salvation ! The world, at best, can but drug with its pestilent opiates the yearning of immortal souls for peace and stability ; the Gospel is ready to satisfy it. Other trumpets would fain drown the clamours of a hostile conscience ; “the great trumpet” is heard above them all, and says to conscience, what philosophy never could—what unbelief never could, “Peace, be still !”

2. It is “the great trumpet,” as being the immediate gift of the great God. “Love Divine, all love excelling,” is its great and marvellous theme ! It proclaims that “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

3. It is “the great trumpet,” because it tells of inconceivable blessings ; the exact ones, which every one craves for, and can find nowhere but in Jesus, the ark of the soul. Rest to the weary : “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” Pardon for the guilty : “Be it known unto you that through Him is preached unto you forgiveness of sins.” Liberty for the captives : “the truth shall make you free.” Health to the sick, sight to the blind, salvation to the perishing.

II. This leads us to our second point—the blowing of “the great trumpet :” it “shall be blown.”

Here there is a tone of resolution, implying the existence of opposition to its being blown ; and there is opposition. The devil would fain keep man asleep ; and the blast of the evangelical trumpet is meant to bid him “awake, and arise from the dead, that Christ may give him light.” Being awaked effectually, still would the same enemy attune his instruments of false concord, to mar the effects of Heaven’s own harmony in the soul. He has ever tried one or other of these methods, since the Gospel’s first publication. Of old “the Lord gave the Word, and great was the company of the preachers.”

Prophetic heralds of "the Lord our righteousness" went forth at intervals amid the chosen people, to pioneer the way for the Prince of salvation. They sounded the trumpet clearly. True, Jesus had not yet come; but inspiration enabled them to speak of things that were not as though they were. Nothing in the New Testament exceeds in plainness Isaiah's proclamation of pardon in the forty-third chapter of his book, at the twenty-fifth verse—"I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember thy sins;" or Jeremiah's well known announcement in his twenty-third chapter, at the sixth verse—"a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and justice in the earth; and this is His name whereby He shall be called, *the Lord our Righteousness*." Or take David's testimony to the results of His advent, in the eighty-fourth Psalm, at the eleventh verse—"The Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." These are specimens; and if the dawn was thus clear, what was the day? if such the distant peal of the trumpet, what was its piercing clangour when it came near to human ears? "John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye! for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." There was the cry summed up—"Repent;" and "faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ" was about to be superadded. Accordingly, the forerunner prolonged the stirring exhortation until Herod silenced him in death; accordingly, the Son of God himself took up the trumpet, and blew through the land the same tremendous blast, 'Repent, believe on Me, and live for ever!' until He, too, "bowed His head, and gave up the ghost;" accordingly, His followers assumed His office, and "went everywhere preaching the Word." Satan raged with malice more deadly, because ineffectual; "some were stoned, some sawn asunder," like their prophetic predecessors; some were beheaded, some crucified, like the great prophet; but affliction refined the gold: louder and louder, above the din of battle, the roar of consuming fires, waxed the trumpet blast, "Believe, and live!" As one trumpeter ascended in his martyr's chariot to heaven, he dropped his instrument into the hands of another as faithful as himself—like Elijah's mantle falling on his servant's shoulder—and thus has a seed been preserved to preach and receive the Lord, unto this day. Ah! there is a peculiar arresting power in that sound. It arrests many whom it benefits not further, though it be meant to do both. There are diversities of talents in them who blow it; but yet, on the lips of "*all* who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity," His name is musical. Nor can such a work be touched, without dignifying and exalting him who touches it. Hence, the same results substantially are wrought on all faithful hearers by the grace of God—conviction of sin, humiliation, pardon, holiness, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

III. Look briefly at the results alluded to here: "They shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." This includes the notion of their being made sensible of their perishing state by the sound to which they come. They never believed it before. This is one of the most awful considerations for the Christian heart—that men's souls are actually perishing—Satan's dark hand upon them—and they will not believe it, but go on calling darkness light, and evil good. Oh! it is such poor sleepers on the margin of eternity, that the Gospel trumpet is meant to rouse! Many such it *has* roused. They were "ready to perish," and the Spirit of God swept down upon the blast of that alarming peal, and told them so—told them that they were *criminals*, and must be pardoned; *vile*, and must be cleansed—told them that earth was not their home, and that heaven never *could* be until they were endued with fitness for it, judicial and personal—that Jesus the righteous had borne their griefs, carried their sorrows, and "*was wounded for their transgressions*," and only waited to be gracious, and was stretching out His hands, imploring them to be "*reconciled to God*" in Him; and they had hearts to embrace, eyes to see, and ears to hear—and "*they that were ready to perish did come*."

The words at the close of the verse, of course refer primarily to the dispersed tribes of Israel, who, in God's good time, shall be gathered in, and "worship the Lord in the holy mount of Jerusalem:" but even here, we are not forbidden to continue our spiritual application; nay, rather encouraged thereto by Paul's example, who addresses his Hebrew converts in the twelfth chapter of the Hebrews, and the twenty-second verse, as "ye" who "are come



unto Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," where the meaning is evidently spiritual; as again, he tells the Galatians in the fourth chapter, when allegorizing the story of Isaac and Ishmael, that "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." So, dear brethren, God's people as yet adore Him in a spiritual Zion. "The hour is come when ye shall neither in this mountain (Gerizim,) nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father;" and you know that an interesting topic of debate in this day is, whether He will ever resume the line of demarcation in favour of the latter mountain. However, of one thing be certain, that now "the Father seeketh such to worship Him," as do so "in spirit and in truth;" and I blow the trumpet now, that thereby this holy band may be increased.

Therefore, ask yourselves whether, having heard that trumpet, you have obeyed its warning voice, or not? Recruits in the camp of Christ, admitted by baptism into outward profession, have you been deaf to that reveillé call in the morning of your days, and, lying on the bed of sloth, seen the host of the redeemed pass on—and you been left behind? Have your darling sins been singled out at any time in your hearing, and you still clung to them? your prejudices been assaulted by the Word of God, and you rejected it rather than them? Is the trumpet sound pleasant to you? How falls the Sabbath bell—the invitation to Jesus—to His supper, on your ears? Does your heart, like David's, feel "glad when they say unto you, let us go into the house of the Lord," or the contrary? Oh! lifeless travellers to eternity, "who hath bewitched you?" Shall this narrowness, this contracted vision ever keep you bound up in the prison of clay, with no sympathies but for mis-called pleasures, no interest but for the bread which perisheth, no hearty obedience but to that infernal Pharaoh, who loves to keep the body at ease, that the soul may starve? Oh! see the counterpart to your own case in the conduct of those whom Jeremiah denounces in his sixth chapter: "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. Also, I set watchmen over you saying, *Hearken to the sound of the trumpet!* but they said, We will not hearken. Therefore, hear ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. Hear, O earth! behold I will bring evil on this people, even the fruit of their own thoughts; because they have not hearkened to My words, nor to My law, but rejected it."

Immortal men, may God bless the call which I have now uttered. Hark! the trumpet is sounding whose theme is mercy and love. How long you may be privileged to hear it, is among the secrets of the Lord: but know this, that another will soon sound, whose theme shall be judgment. "Behold I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." The Lord now descends by His Spirit, suing for acceptance in His creatures' hearts; but "the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise." Brethren, would you behold Him joyfully then? Accept Him readily now! Would you start from your coffins with exultation at the sound of that trumpet? Incline your ear to the sound of this! Take up, in God's name, the Pearl of great price, and let it not be said in heaven that it has been thrown to dogs and swine, who prized the offal of a perishing world more. Set your houses in order, as they who feel the superiority of eternity's claims over time's; and then, let the day of the Lord come; if dead, you shall rise with joy; if alive, "we that remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words!"

# THE PORTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED CONTRASTED.

## A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. ROBERT BICKERSTETH, B.A.

. PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, CLAPHAM,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, SEPT. 12, 1847.

*"Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about."*—Psalm xxxii. 10.

THERE is a remarkable contrast exhibited to us in these words. The wicked are set in opposition to those who make Jehovah their trust; and the "many sorrows" of the one are set in contrast with the mercy-encompassing privilege of the other. It is obvious that by contrasting a wicked man with one of whom it is said that he "trusteth in the Lord," the Psalmist intended to give this as the definition of a wicked person; namely that he is one who places no trust in the Lord. The direct opposite to a wicked man, is the man who reposes dependence upon God; while the characteristic feature of a wicked person, is that he is void of all confidence in his Maker.

This certainly is not the description that would be generally given of a wicked person. If you had to sketch the portrait of one who is surrendered over to wickedness, so that all would agree in the recognition of his character as that of a wicked man, you would probably colour the picture with some of those deeper atrocities which are commonly supposed to constitute moral depravity. You would think it too mild and too soft a definition to give of a wicked person, simply to affirm in respect of such an one, that he is a man who places no trust in God; and yet more attentive examination will serve to illustrate, that scarcely could there be a more emphatic or a more melancholy description—more painful or more comprehensive, to give of a wicked man, than to declare of him that he is the exact opposite of one who puts trust in God. Why, only consider how want of trust in God leads necessarily to all that is depraved and vicious in practice. The man who is devoid of such trust has no defence left to keep him from any one species of wickedness. What is it but trust in God—trust in His character—trust in His promises—trust in His threatenings, which lies at the foundation of all that is morally excellent? Do away with this trust, and there seems to be no safeguard left to hinder from wickedness, or allure to piety. Let this trust be wanting, and where is the motive remaining, whether to animate for duty, or to warn from iniquity? Heaven cannot attract, hell cannot scare the individual who is destitute of confidence in God; and there walks not upon earth a being who is an easier prey for destruction than he out of whose heart there has been once thoroughly expelled all principle of reliance upon God. Thus, although it were possible to sketch a more striking picture of wickedness, by throwing into the moral portrait the hideous colourings of vice, yet a more accurate or faithful delineation of wickedness could not be given than this—it is the want of all trust in God. If we would go to first principles, and describe moral depravity according to its real essence, we must make

mention of this as the distinctive property of sinfulness, namely, a want of trust in God; and when you have ranged into separate classes the evil and the good, and want to describe them according to their respective characters, by names which shall most befittingly indicate the difference, you must say of the wicked that these are the complete opposites in character of those whose glory it is that they trust in the Lord. It is easy to perceive, on the other hand, that one of the best and most suitable descriptions to give of a righteous person is briefly this—that he trusts in the Lord.

Here, too, if you were set to delineate the moral character, you might be tempted to throw into the picture many of those graces which morally adorn the righteous. You might sketch the noble qualities of true believers, and speak of those glorious deeds of faith which the righteous in every age have successfully achieved. You might speak of the conquests they have won over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and of all those excellencies of character which invariably adorn the true servant of God. But we say in reference to this case, as well as in reference to the former, that the best description would be that which spoke of the real essence of the character; and what is this but trust in God? If you would give a description which applies to the believer, at every stage of his spiritual experience, a description that equally belongs to the righteous of every clime, and whatever the measure or degree of their attainment in godliness, we hardly know where you could find a truer or more appropriate one than this, which briefly portrays the character of the godly, under the description of such as trust in the Lord. Whether you look at the patriarchs of old, prophets and righteous men, who have become memorable on the page of the world's history for their devotion to God's service—apostles, and martyrs, and saints of every age, from the most illustrious to the least known and least distinguished; all of these have been animated by one principle; and the mainspring of their conduct as godly individuals hath been simply this—their trust in the Lord.

We go on to observe, that there is a remarkable contrast between the portions which the Psalmist here assigns to each. In regard of the wicked he affirms, "Many shall be their sorrows;" but he does not put "joys" as the distinguishing lot of the righteous, in opposition to those sorrows. The direct opposite of the sorrows here predicted to the wicked, one might have deemed, would have been joy and gladness to the righteous; but, on the contrary, David speaks simply of "mercy" as the lot of the righteous. "Sorrows" are to be the heritage, he says, of the wicked, but the counterpoise to the righteous which he speaks of is mercy. There is doubtless a reason for this. There must be some satisfactory cause wherefore the Psalmist should speak of mercy rather than of joy as falling to the possession of the righteous. We shall inquire more fully into this in an after part of our discourse. All that we would further notice, as preliminary to the main subject, is briefly this, that the Psalmist must be understood to refer to the present experience of the two classes of whom he speaks. It is in regard of this life that he declares, "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked," "Mercy shall encompass the righteous." Not indeed that the declaration need be restricted to the present state of existence. Sorrows will be the portion of such as die; the wicked; yea, multiplied and irremediable sorrows: and mercy, too, will characterise the portion of the righteous, even as they walk in blessedness in eternity. Still the main drift of the saying refers to what goes forward in this life, and we shall consider the declaration consequently as relating especially to the present experiences of the righteous and the wicked; and the simple inquiry before us resolves itself into this, whether the prediction of what is to befall the wicked and the righteous respectively in time, may not be shown to have such ample fulfilment that it ought to act as a guard against impiety, and as an incentive to godliness. Let us apply ourselves, then, to vindicate the two assertions of the Psalmist. We wish, by God's help, to show you how accurately the prophecy receives its verification, and

thus to admonish the wicked from wickedness, and to strengthen the righteous in their obedience, from considering, in the first place, that "many sorrows shall be to the wicked;" and, in the second place, "he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about."

I. We are to inquire, then, to begin with, whether the common experience of the wicked does really bear out the accuracy of what David here foretells, when he says, "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked."

And here we shall doubtless be met by much of conflicting testimony. The spectacle is one that so frequently presents itself, namely, that of the wicked prospering in the full enjoyment of present tranquillity; rejoicing in a present immunity from many of those trials and perplexities which oftentimes embarrass the godly; and many and many a time a true believer has been perplexed at the contemplation of the wicked as exulting in a present serenity which is frequently sighed for in vain by the righteous. The Psalmist himself, who penned the declaration of the text, was not free from the perplexity which such a spectacle is apt to engender. He himself was tempted to inquire, how it could consist with the character of the wicked to behold them prospering in such undisturbed quiet? He surveyed men who, in his day, were regardless of the Most High, flourishing in all the elements of present tranquillity and abundance; to all appearance agitated by no care, and troubled with no anxiety. And perhaps the common opinion is that which ascribes to the ungodly a greater freedom from restraint,—a larger possession of present happiness than others share. So that it is to broach an opposite to the general opinion to affirm that the prophecy is usually borne out in the present experience; "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked." We admit that many sorrows will be to them hereafter, ay, sorrows such as tongue of man cannot describe, and thought of man cannot fathom; but where shall we look for the "many sorrows" whereof the Psalmist speaks as befalling the wicked now? Where do you read the fulfilment, in what you observe in this life, of the sentence, "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked?" It is a sentence which seems to condemn the wicked to reap sorrows in this life; and in the face of so much that appears just the reverse, we are to inquire, in what consist those *present* sorrows which, if Scripture be true, are even now felt by the wicked?

Now let us bear in mind the definition which has been already given of a wicked person; he is one who places no trust in God; his sources of dependence have no reference to the Almighty. Consequently they must be created; and if merely created sources, they must be temporal in their own nature, finite and perishable. We must keep to this position, namely, that the sources of a wicked man's enjoyment are all transient. According to the description here given of a wicked man, he is one who trusts not in the Lord, who resigns not himself, that is, to be influenced whether by the fear of what God hath threatened to inflict, or by the hope of what God hath promised to bestow. My definition of a man who trusts in the Lord, is simply this: he is a man who, in the confidence that the threatenings of the Almighty will be verified, and that the promises of the Almighty will assuredly be kept, resigns himself to avoid whatsoever God hath forbidden, and to do whatsoever God hath commanded; and the element of his happiness is simply dependence upon God,—the consciousness that he is reposing upon a mighty though invisible Defender, whose promise cannot fail; whose help is equal to sustain, whatever the emergency into which he may fall. The wicked man is one who is wholly uninfluenced by such considerations. His dependence is not on God; it is, therefore, on some created good. Now, to every man the source of conscious strength is the source of joy. "The joy of the Lord," it is affirmed of the righteous, "shall be their strength." Wherever you repose your main confidence there you repose the foundation of your peace. The Christian reposes all his confidence in God; God is therefore the source of his joy; and since we affirm it to be characteristic of a

wicked man, that he trusts not in the Lord, it seems to follow, by strict inference, that his joy must be dependent upon some created source ; but if a created source, it is one that may wither and dry up. There is nothing created which has not at least a liability to change and decay. The most enduring works of creation have a law of change impressed upon them, in virtue of which they may ultimately vanish. When, therefore, we have proved that the sources of a wicked man's confidence must be perishable in their own nature, have we not gone a long way towards the conclusion, that " many are his sorrows ?" If his joy must be contingent upon the stability of that whereon he reposes confidence ; and if, according to the character here given of a wicked man, his confidence is in a created object, and therefore liable to perish, have we not prepared the way for expecting that he will meet with " many sorrows ?"

Now, we will not pause to examine into those many sources of confidence, and therefore of joy, to which the wicked cling, who trust not in the Lord. It may be wealth, reputation, or power, in the possession whereof the wicked man places his trust ; or it may be any one of those multiplied objects which so easily engross the affection and ensnare the confidence. But what is true of any one of them is equally true of the rest,—it is a fleeting and perishable object ; it must ultimately fail its possessor. It will either elude his grasp, or he may be rendered unequal longer to retain it ; and what we do affirm in respect of the wicked generally is this, that if their sources of enjoyment are thus liable to fail, and that too possibly at the very moment when some stable foundation of happiness shall be felt to be most needful, need we search further to be convinced, that from the nature of the case " many are the sorrows of the wicked ?" The failure of that in which I repose confidence,—the snapping asunder of that upon which I lean for security,—the drying up of the fountain at which I slake the appetite for enjoyment, must necessarily ensure sorrow. Let us take, then, the whole range of created enjoyments, in which the unrighteous seek, yea, and find pleasure. We deny not at all the capability of these objects to confer a present though transient happiness. There is enjoyment in affluence, despite the corroding care which wealth too often brings along with it. There is enjoyment in power, despite the anxieties which too frequently sting its possessor. There is enjoyment in ambition,—the towering passion which prompts an individual to aspire from one pinnacle to another of greatness, till he looks down from some lofty eminence on the throng of his fellows whom he has surpassed. But in respect of these, and of all the manifold objects in which the mass of those who trust not in the Lord repose confidence, we have the same truth to affirm, namely, that they are *created* sources of enjoyment,—fragile in their own nature, certain not to satisfy in possession, and still more certain to slip from the possessor ; and therefore we appeal to the most successful of all the votaries of pleasure,—to those who have accumulated the most of wealth, or wielded the most of power, or climbed the loftiest peak of carnal ambition, and who have reposed their main confidence in these, and have not trusted in the Lord, whether their very sources of happiness have not proved sources of sorrow ? We read in classic story of one who commanded a vast army, who, when he looked forth on the mighty gathering of his brave and well equipped warriors, could not refrain from tears in the thought that the forms of men so brave might be on the morrow strewn on the dust. Xerxes wept in the contemplation of such a possibility. Alas ! might we not weep over the thousand objects, wherein those who trust not in the Lord repose for happiness, in the consciousness that so uncertain is the tenure which their possessors enjoy, that the morrow's sun may behold them vanish like a meteor ? Every source of confidence to the wicked may thus become the source of sorrow ; and the multiplicity of objects on which the unrighteous fasten their confidence, irrespective of God, being all doomed to fail their possessor, may be brought in to vindicate the truthfulness of the saying, that " many are the sorrows of the wicked."

We have thus at least shown that the joys of the wicked are hollow and unsub-

stantial. Mark, we do not at all deny the fact of there being enjoyment found and possessed by the wicked: it were to assert what a thousand voices might at once be uplifted to deny, to assert there is no pleasure in sin. Scripture admits the truth, that the ungodly do reap a present enjoyment in the pursuit of ungodliness, for it speaks of the "pleasures of sin." But what we maintain, with no fear of contradiction, is just this; that whatever the object upon which a man fasten his desires irrespective of God, whatever the pursuit in which he finds pleasure apart from reference to God, must in its own nature ultimately fail. We insist not now so much upon the point that all created objects are inadequate to satisfy the cravings of the immortal spirit. No man can satisfy the desires of the soul with anything short of God. There will ever be a yearning after some good not yet acquired till the soul hath come to fasten her confidence upon God the Author of her being. But what we rather urge upon your attention just now is the truth, that every created source of happiness must ultimately fail. There is nothing created upon which you can centre the affections, which is not liable to slip from your hold; and though you should retain it to the end of life, what can it avail in the moment of death? Hence it is because all the sources of dependence to a wicked person are not only unsatisfying in possession, but most precarious of tenure, and because the drying up of a source of confidence must be the occasion of sorrow, therefore do we pronounce the truth of the declaration, "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked."

We may go further yet than this. Thus far we have seemed to vindicate the Psalmist's declaration, by proving merely that sorrow must at length be inherited by the wicked; whereas the drift of his assertion rather appears to be that sorrows accompany their whole course. They reap a present heritage of sorrow, even before the discovery of failure in all their sources of confidence. Are we then to believe that a wicked man, that is, one who lives and moves, and has his being in God, and yet neither trusts nor fears the Almighty, is visited at every step of his career with sorrows which he cannot dissipate? This would seem to be the full scope of the inspired statement; nor is it the only passage of Scripture in which the same truth is maintained. We elsewhere read, "There is no peace to the wicked"—an expression in respect of which there is not furnished a hint that it is intended to refer only to the next life. It rather seems to belong to the whole course of the wicked, from the first surrender of themselves to vice, till they reap in eternity the punishment which is not to be exhausted. Wherein then consist those "many sorrows," which are felt by the wicked even now, in the pursuit of their career of iniquity? I will not take an extreme case. I will not suppose the instance of one who is wholly addicted to vice. We all know that God hath annexed by an irreversible appointment misery to vice. It would seem that in no one instance can we overstep the lawful indulgence of the passions implanted in our nature, without endowing those passions with the power to torment. But in supposing an extreme case, and in showing that the slave of vice has to plough his career through a sea of tumultuous sorrow,—the sorrows of mental disquiet and remorse, we should, in all probability, prove only what all admit, and in directing observation to such a case as this, there would be none present to fall within scope of the exhibition. We will rather confine ourselves to the instance of one whose main feature of wickedness is that alluded to in the text,—he does not trust in the Lord. We need not suppose him addicted to any of those grosser vices which are the proofs of deeper depravity. Let us rather imagine the case of one, in respect of whom all that is to be recorded is this that "he trusts not in the Lord." He walks the earth, upheld indeed by Divinity, but scorning to own His dependence. Promise allures not; threatening terrifies not; and his demeanour is outwardly that of one free from sorrow. Where do you find in such an one the verification of what is asserted in our text? Now we reply at once, you will not find it on the surface, or in the outer demeanour. But we know of such an one, that God hath endowed him with conscience, and that it is not permitted to him to traverse his

onward path of reckless indifference to God, untroubled by the reproofs of this inward monitor. We know that within this man's breast, as much as within the breast of the righteous, there are heard the echoes of a voice which tells of a judgment to come, and of a long unbroken eternity in which anguish may have to be everlastingly endured. More especially is it the case that conscience lifts up her voice loudly and authoritatively, if the man be in a position where he is plied with the invitations and the warnings of the Gospel. We cannot believe that men can be impressively warned of the perils of ungodliness, or entreated to flee in order to escape from the wrath to come, without becoming at some period the subjects of an inward alarm, or apprehension, begetting at least the desire, if no more, to make their peace with God. The testimony of conscience is very peculiar. It is given within the chambers of a man's own heart. It is given quite independently of his own willingness or consent; there can be no refusal to hearken; there can be no denial of the statement. And if there be such a principle as this, within the breasts of all men; indeed I want nothing more to convince me of the truth, that "many are the sorrows of the wicked." It is quite possible to wear outwardly a cheerful and serene aspect; but come and let us descend into the inner recesses of the heart, and observe what goes onward there; is it all so quiet and unruffled there as the outward aspect would seem to indicate? We will not anticipate the meeting with the fierce agitation of stormy and ungoverned passions. The case we are supposing is not that of one whose breast is torn by conflicting appetites, it is simply that of one "who has no trust in the Lord." The hope of heaven never allures to exertion; the fear of punishment scarce ever deters from wickedness. But are you never uneasy or terrified at the prospect that you may pass into eternity wholly unprovided for? What are those forebodings of judgment? those inward reproaches which upbraid you with not giving heed to the invitations of the Gospel? those reproofs, uttered so startlingly and thrillingly, when you either do what is evil, or neglect what you know to be duty? These are amongst the things which go to constitute the sorrows of the wicked. They come not in the shape of visible calamities. They are compounded not of shattered fortunes, or bereaved homes, or of injured reputation. It is the secret, undefined apprehension of a soul which feels that it wants its proper resting-place, and dreads the future, because ignorant what of misery that future may not entail. These are sorrows which appear not on the surface, but are all the more keen because buried so deeply. They are wrought up and composed of the constant conflict which conscience will maintain in the breast. The fears of judgment it will create; the dread of eternity; the dislike of having to appear before God! That they are felt more or less by the wicked, it were folly to deny; multitudes are harassed by them who yet keep them concealed. But seeing that God hath implanted a conscience within each man, we can fasten upon this truth, and knowing that He will upbraid us for continuance in sin, and will enforce the reproofs by an appeal to all that is most terrific to such as trust not in the Lord, we want no further evidence to prove that the course of the wicked is no such peaceful career as some would imagine; but rather one of so much inward apprehension, as abundantly confirms the inspired prediction, "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked."

II. We come now to inquire, as proposed, secondly, into the force of the statement with respect to the righteous: "He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass Him about." We have sufficiently pointed out to you the meaning and the fitness of this definition of a righteous person; namely, he "that trusteth in the Lord." It is just a firm confidence in God which lies at the basis of a Christian's walk and conversation. It is in proportion to the trust which I have in God; in His faithfulness, and truth, and power, and love; that I shall ever walk so as to serve and to please Him. What we are now concerned with is the nature of the blessing here promised to the righteous. Terrors are spoken of as the heritage of the wicked, but it

is not "joy" which is spoken of as the possession of the righteous. It is mercy which is promised to these. Plainly, however, this latter promise has respect to God's dealings with the believer; God will deal with the righteous in mercy, whereas the former prediction seems to belong to what the wicked unavoidably procure to themselves. Their course has a natural tendency to heap up sorrows, and those sorrows may be spoken of as resulting from their own contrivances; but the second promise refers to the mode in which God will deal with his people. They are to be encompassed with mercy; and mercy, as displayed by the Almighty to His people, appears to be composed of "pity and love." Is this not just the combination of properties from which the believer has most cause for exultation? There is the assurance of love; and if any one thing in all this world ought to light up with joy the heart of man, it is the consciousness of being the object of love to the Creator; to share in the lovingkindness of Divinity. This ought in itself to constitute such a wellspring of gladness, as for ever to keep from despondency. The Christian knows, however, that when most eager to trust in the Lord, and when therefore most in the condition to which there is promised a share in His love, he is prone to err and transgress, and therefore it is not alone the assurance of love in which they ought to rejoice, the exercise of pity is quite as essential. If pity did not mingle with the Divine love, alas! should we not be in danger of quenching that love through our manifold provocations? It may be for bright and unfallen orders of being, those who have never transgressed, to exult in the assurance of the love of Divinity. Their high and unsullied estate seems to demand not the exercise of pity or compassion. But those who have sinned, and are continually in danger of falling afresh by iniquity, must have the assurance of something more than love. Pity must be blended with love; and it is the union of these properties which forms mercy, the quality which is here said to enter so largely into God's dealings with the believer. "He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass Him about." It is as though he were to be environed with mercy. Mercy presiding over every dealing of the Almighty with him; mercy meeting him at every turn, upholding him at every step. We have been often struck with observing how accurately the principles which enter into the plan of salvation, correspond with those which are developed in its application to the souls of individuals. For example: we know it to be the union of mercy and truth which constitutes the grand feature in the scheme of redemption. There is infinite mercy devising the plan of recovery. "In His love," it is said, "and in his pity He redeemed them." "Love and pity" are here spoken of as the ingredients of mercy. But it was not mercy alone which achieved the deliverance of the lost. It was mercy acting in union with justice. Mercy may be said to have discovered the mode of redemption; but justice is equally brought into exercise for its procurement. Mercy was exercised towards the sinner, because justice was first executed on the Substitute. Such was the arrangement for human redemption, an arrangement which presents this impressive combination of mercy acting in union with justice; and now justice and mercy are equally concerned in the application of the finished work of the Redeemer. I must have first satisfied the Divine justice, before I can exult in the assurance of being continually the object of the Divine mercy. But how may a creature be said to satisfy the Divine justice? Why, simply through becoming identified by faith with Him who has already completed the satisfaction. It is their trusting in the Lord; or, in other words, the acting faith upon the Mediator, and exhibiting this faith by obedience, which brings me into the position for claiming the promise of being encompassed with mercy. There is, first, the consigning one's self exclusively to the Mediator; and then the experience of the rich promise, in all the subsequent dealings of God—"He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about."

And now we would address ourselves to all of you, in conclusion, and appeal to



you whether there is not sufficiency of motive presented by the text for trusting in the Lord? We speak of such a trust in the Lord as implies a firm confidence in the truth of His every declaration. He hath given to us the volume of His Word. It is strewn, so to speak, with animating promise and with awful threatening; with promise relating to all that is most blessed for time and for eternity; with threatening which scares by the mention of woes which eternity can neither mitigate nor exhaust. The trusting in the Lord, whereof the text speaks, implies so stedfast a reliance upon God, that animated by the hope of what He hath promised, I make every endeavour to attain it; that, forsaking all confidence in every other source of dependence, I shall make the ever-living God my friend, and seek happiness only in conformity to His revealed will. To this trusting in the Lord, there is promised the most blessed recompence, the favour of God to smile on the present, and the light of His countenance to beam in its full radiance on the whole of the future existence. Who amongst us will now resolve upon trusting thus simply and exclusively on the Lord? Alas! there are a multitude of other objects which interpose, and claim our confidence. We readily take up with some created good, and seek or find happiness in the enjoyment of pleasures that have no reference to God. But we warn you against the mistake of supposing those only are the wicked who are in the ranks of the more openly depraved. All are, in God's sight, the wicked, whose trust is not in the Lord. Whether, therefore, it be in riches, or in honours, or in any created object whatever, that I place the chief dependence, and seek mainly for happiness, in so doing, I place myself with those against whom there are threatened "many sorrows." We pretend not to decipher with precision in what shape those many sorrows shall come; but we know that while all created sources of gladness are unsatisfying in their own nature, all of them are slippery in possession. If we have reposed our confidence in these, we must have treasured up for ourselves many sorrows, when the agony of disappointment arrives; and, besides all this, there are the "sorrows" which will be occasioned by a disquieted conscience, the forebodings of judgment, the dread of retributive punishment. Who would be a prey to such sorrows as these, when there is offered to him "a place of sure refuge to flee to"—a portion which is commensurate with the largest desires of the soul, and which is lasting as satisfying? Oh! if I address one among you who hath never yet resigned himself up to trust in the Lord, I would beseech of him, by all that is most touching in the invitation, and all that is most terrible in the penalties of the Gospel, not to depart from this sanctuary to-night, till He hath formed the resolution henceforth to trust only in the Lord. It is written by the finger of God, and the waters of ocean cannot wash out the record, "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked." It may be you have tasted some of them already; and will not your own experience then lead you to forsake that indifference to God, which is fraught with present peril, and leads to future perdition? "He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." This promise does not exclude the possibility of sorrow, though, indeed, it is hard to imagine what sorrow can oppress one who has God in all seasons to appeal to as his Friend. But sorrows, if sent to the righteous, are sent in overflowing pity and love; they are for his moral purification, designed to cleanse, but not consume. They are not inconsistent then with the promise, "Mercy shall compass him about." That mercy waits to embrace us all. Oh! that, one and all, we might apply ourselves to the business of faith; so trusting in the Lord as implicitly to obey His every direction; till, at every step of our pilgrimage we realize fresh fulfilments of the promise—"He that trusteth in the Lord mercy shall compass him about."

## HELP IN TROUBLE.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. JOHN HAMBLETON, M.A.

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL OF EASE, ISLINGTON,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 12, 1847.

*"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."*—Ps. xli. 1.

MAN'S need and God's grace are evidently adapted for each other. Pity that any who know the one should continue strangers to the other! Would that all who have experimental acquaintance with human need, might be so led to experience the Divine grace as to be enabled to say with the Psalmist, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble!"

And not with the Psalmist only. He speaks it as no private opinion of his own, but as that of all the people of God in his day. "*Our* refuge and strength." And not in his day only—in all ages of the church this his testimony has been echoed and re-echoed by all who have known a God in covenant as their God; He has ever proved Himself, to each and to all of them, their "refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

In studying together this faithful saying, let us trace out, and keep in closely connected view, man's need and God's grace. Let us consider, first, God "our refuge," or how we need a refuge—how we find God himself our refuge; then, secondly, God our "strength," or our need of strength—God himself our strength; and thirdly, God our "very present help in trouble," or the help we need—God himself that help.

May the Holy Spirit, whose gracious name is the Comforter, bless the subject very graciously to every one of us ever needing a refuge, or strength, or help in trouble!

I. Consider first, then, God "our refuge," or how we need a refuge—how we find God Himself our refuge.

"God is our refuge." Have we all ever felt our need of God as our refuge? Perhaps not. We do indeed need God to be our refuge; but we may have never known or understood it.

1. I would ask, therefore, first, have we ever felt any need at all of a refuge?

A refuge is a place of shelter from a storm, of safe protection from foes, of preservation amid dangers. Many of you have, at one time or other, been exposed to some terrible storm, by sea or land. How welcome then the harbour of refuge, or the place of shelter! You can understand how David, when persecuted by Saul, found a refuge in the natural caves and fortresses of the land; you remember the provision, under the Mosaic law, of the cities of refuge, whereto the manslayer might flee, and there be in perfect security from the pursuit of the avenger of

blood. All this you can understand. You have, then, a sufficient notion of what a refuge is.

And now think—be kind enough to yourselves to think—of your need for God to be your refuge.

You are exposed, let me faithfully remind you, to a storm more terrible than any you have ever witnessed. As a sinner you are liable, the inspired apostle tells us, to the “indignation and wrath,” with the “tribulation and anguish,” denounced by God, in His justice, upon “every soul of man that doeth evil.”

We have sometimes thought little of that storm. “Fools make a mock of sin.” Have none of us ever charged ourselves with sinning—(I say not in what way—let conscience remind every one—let the Holy Spirit remind the conscience)—when before we should have laughed at the idea of committing that sin? You know what that sin was, ever requiring you to seek a refuge from the storm of God’s wrath. So it is; “God is not mocked;” the work being done, the reckoning must follow. “The wages of sin is death.”

“What! death eternal?” some ask, “is that the just retribution for that transient sin?” But was it transient? Sin, once committed, remains in all its real guilt, until God, in His mercy and in His own appointed way, blot it out. The thing done cannot become a thing undone. The character of a sin never changes in the sight of God.

And then, that act of sin was prompted by a sinful soul. The very same disposition would prompt to other acts of sin, each and all exceedingly sinful. Sin is wandering from God; and the sinner would of himself wander on farther and farther. He willfully departs and separates himself from God. That sentence from God, however solemn, is but His judicial confirmation of the sinner’s own previous corrupt choice. He *would* go from God—he *shall* go away into everlasting punishment.”

Besides, in that one act of sin there is infinite guilt, as being committed against the infinite God. Think of His all-gracious goodness—His almighty greatness—His perfect purity—His inviolable truth—His rights, as man’s moral governor—His holy commands—His kind invitations—His solemn warnings; and then commune with your conscience, and say whether it were a light matter to do the very thing which He expressly forbids.

You see, then, the storm gathered: you hear the distant thunder, in its echoes from Mount Sinai; you see the liquid fire, as it once came pouring down from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah; you observe what sin did, when “the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up,” and the deluge of many waters swept away the world of the ungodly. And yet all this is but an image of the storm gathering against you, as a sinner.

2. But “God is our refuge.”

This, my brethren, is God in covenant. The original word, it may well be mentioned to some, is *Elohim*,—that word applied to God which has reference to the plurality of persons in the Godhead. “God” in Christ Jesus, to whom we are drawn by the Holy Spirit, “is our refuge.”

Oh! how admirable is this refuge! “A man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.” The Man Christ Jesus, the Son of God, has become our refuge. He, in our place, has borne the wrath of God against sin. He was “wounded,” “bruised,” “cut off,” yea, slain, “for our transgressions.” We now have but to be found in Him by faith, and we are safe—yea, safer than Lot was in Zoar, or than Noah was in the ark. Their safety was tem-

poral—ours, in Christ Jesus, is eternal. Through Him we may find His Father, our Father—His God, our God, to be “our refuge.”

Thus is Christ Himself also, in reference to another figure of Scripture, as our city of refuge. As sinners we are as if having the avenger of blood pursuing us. If he finds us out of our refuge, he has full right, according to the law of God, to strike us with the death-stroke. Only think, if ye were fleeing for your lives, how ye would speed! With what joy ye would see the refuge! With what eagerness ye would press into it! So death is after you, as sinners. He is very near—yea, close behind. “There is but a step between me and death.”

Press on, then, to Christ. Being found in Him, there is safety; every where else is danger. Trusting in Him we have life; away from Him there is death, behind and before, surrounding us on all sides. There is no escape, but in “our refuge.”

And so amidst all dangers and all alarms, from whatever quarter or source, we need, and may find in God, a refuge. And “if God be for us, who can be against us?” Then all His attributes are engaged, by His own covenant, in our behalf. His love provides the refuge; His truth secures it; His power upholds it: yea, He himself, with all His glorious perfections, is “our refuge.”

Thus we need a refuge; and we may find, to our great joy and comfort, “God our refuge.” But is this all?—

II. We may, secondly, have God “our strength.” Let us now think of our need of strength, and of God Himself “our strength.”

1. That we are poor, weak creatures, many will admit, with regard to the body. The weakness of infancy is quite proverbial; old age is often, as to strength, a second childhood; and “let not the strong man glory in his strength.” How soon, or how suddenly, may a single stroke unstring the nerves, and make impotent the sinews! How quickly a fever reduces the manly frame to feebleness! What a poor weak thing is man, as to his body!

But not only so, his mind often gives great proofs of weakness. To yield to temptation is weakness. Temptation, so clearly exposed in Scripture, it has led so many astray, it has so often deceived us, that to be again and again yielding to temptation is a great proof of moral weakness.

Then in arduous duties, what weakness and insufficiency we continually feel, if we know ourselves! If at times, through self-ignorance, we are confident in our own strength, we are soon made to feel that we have been leaning on a broken reed. We sometimes make a strong resolution, commence to act on it vigorously, and then, through infirmity of purpose, or inability for continuous effort, break off, and leave the attempted work half done or undone—like the building of one who would not first count the cost.

How troubles prove our weakness! How many faint and fail before them! A few, indeed, who as yet know not God as “our strength,” through unusual firmness of nerve stand out a little longer, and show themselves a little stronger than the many—but often only to succumb the more signally, as the trial proceeds and increases.

In how many ways we see and feel how weak is man!

2. But “God is our strength.”

In himself he is God Almighty. What a wondrous attribute is Omnipotence! What stupendous proofs of its exercise have we in creation and providence! Who made the worlds out of nothing, launched them in infinite space, and so ordered their goings forth that they continue to move for ages in their orbit, without

collision, without wear and tear of the machinery, without need of continual repairs?

But this view is that of almighty strength brought to bear upon inanimate matter; the view before us is that of God *our* strength. God, the strength of his rational creatures, having souls and bodies, subject (as we have just now shown) to weakness,—He is the author of all our spiritual strength. By His Holy Spirit He infuses energy into our souls, making us “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” By His word, applied to the heart by His Spirit, He forms and confirms in us the principle of faith—that strong and energetic principle whereby so many “out of weakness have been made strong.”

Having faith of a solid and saving character, we quite feel our own weakness and inability to save or help ourselves; we have right views of our fallen state—our sinfulness, our guilt. Faith is an intelligent and enlightened principle, and must not be confounded with the ignorance of pride, or the vain confidence of presumption. It is the result of repentance toward God, and is qualified by humility of mind. And yet this faith, so sensible of infirmity, so conscious of unworthiness, so thoroughly convinced that the man who has not faith cannot save himself, so well taught from Scripture to know our desert as sinners, will yet carry us boldly to God, asking for pardon, justification, and eternal life.

But how, and on what plea? Whose merits has it to plead? what arguments to produce, not only why justice should not take its course, and sin receive its just recompence, but why the sinner should be admitted to the Divine favour, and exalted to the Divine dignity? Faith is not an intruder into God’s presence; it comes at His bidding; it accepts His invitation; it rests on the Saviour of sinners, provided by God in the person of His own dear Son, who now, after His finished work of “obedience unto death,” reigns on high, is exalted to glory, to mediate with prevalence for all who will come unto God by Him.

Here, then, is God our strength, strengthening our faith, and enabling us to trust in Him, through Christ, amidst all the accusations of conscience, backed by Satan, who is first the tempter, then the tormentor, and continually “the accuser of the brethren.”

Now this is the strength of God, brought to bear upon the weakness of man; and it is really more admirable than the strength of Omnipotence, exerted in creating and upholding a world. In the one case all is against and above nature, and overcomes resistance and opposition; in the other, nature is all subservience and compliance. There is no enmity against God in mere matter, as there is, or was, in our sinful hearts. Who, that we know of, except men and devils, have resisted His power?

Is it not, then, an excellent exertion of Divine strength, when sinners are “made willing in the day of Christ’s power,” and can rest simply and singly on Him for salvation?

And then “God is our strength” for the duties and trials of the Christian life.” “I can do all things,” said the apostle, “through Christ which strengtheneth me.” It was a very bold saying, but quite warranted by Christ himself, who had expressly said to His suffering servant, “My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Hence that strength for serving Christ which so remarkably characterized St. Paul. Here is the secret of his strength; not in his natural abilities and energy, which might have made him a clever scholar, a learned rabbi, or a most skilful tent-maker, but could never have made him what he was—so abounding in labours, so ready to languish in prison—nay, not to languish in

prison, but while there to write precious principles, to teach the Gospel to all those who came within his reach, and at length to crown all with a martyr's death. Whence his strength for all this? Whence, but in the strength of Christ, and the energy of His indwelling Spirit? Whence, but from the very same source from which we also, weak as we are in ourselves, may continually receive strength?

Yes, if we would be strong to labour or suffer faithfully as Christians, we must in reality "know Christ," that His power may rest upon us, and work in us mightily. Then, through Christ, we know and can testify that "God is our strength;" then it is wonderful to see what great things we can do, and what great things we can bear, through the might of the Holy Spirit and the energy of His grace. The more we are made to feel our own weakness, the more we then realize, by increased dependence, the strength of Christ working in our souls. The outward man may be decayed, yet the inward man be "renewed day by day." "My heart and my flesh faileth," one of us may ere long have to say, and yet may we be enabled to add, "but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

III. But we have still a third view of God to take from this our encouraging subject. We have seen and considered "God our refuge," and God our "strength;" let us now consider, God "a very present help in trouble," or the help we need—God himself that help.

1. To attempt to prove that man is exposed to trouble, and that man, when in trouble, needs help, would be really a sort of mockery. Eliphaz the Temanite, one of Job's friends, was wrong in applying his argument to Job; but he did not at all misrepresent man's condition, when he said, "Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground, yet man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward."

How uncommon to find any who say, "We have never known trouble!" Sometimes some one begins a sentence, "I may say, I scarcely knew trouble *till*,"—then comes the mention of some trouble indeed, "that first bereavement, that crushing calamity, that serious illness, or that deep, sharp, first conviction of sin and sense of danger for the soul." With others, the life has been, throughout a series of years, a succession of heavy troubles—wave rolling after wave, storm following storm—each trouble, in some sense, heavier than the preceding, because of the increased accumulation.

And hence some err in judgment, like Job's friends, and fancy that where there are the heaviest troubles there must have been the greatest sins. "I know not what I have done," said a young man, leaning on crutches, with his health gone, and his power of supporting himself gone with it—"I know not what I have done," he said to me the other day, with a countenance showing an embittered spirit, "why God should send me such heavy troubles." I tried to teach him what may be the wise and loving purpose of God, afflicting in order to profit us, by drawing us to Himself, through Christ our Saviour.

But I said it is needless, it is also superfluous, to prove that we are exposed to trouble.

And how then, we need help! How we then do feel our dependence on each other! The idea of independence is a proud idea (we then feel) for poor troubled man. How suited to our state is the exhortation, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ!" How considerate and touching we conceive to be the counsel, "Remember them which are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer affliction, as being also in the body," and therefore liable to similar

adversity. Surely God must well know our frame, and understand the sweetness of the sympathy which, when it can do no more, will "weep with them that weep," according to the exhortation of His inspired apostle!

But is it enough to have human help in trouble? Man can but minister help as God permits and enables; man's help is very limited indeed; many troubles are far beyond his effectual help.

How little he can do, in the way of help, for mental troubles! and outward troubles are chiefly troubles in proportion as they press upon the mind. What miserable comforters are worldly friends to one whose mind is deadened with anxiety! How poor their topics of comfort! How chilling their philosophy! It is often little better than stoical apathy or brutish insensibility.

For the whole class of spiritual troubles, from the first conviction of sin to the last conflict between the flesh and the spirit, the worldly can give no help. That conviction they would bid you drown in dissipation,—that conflict they would stupify with narcotics.

And then, spiritual-minded men will all testify, they can help only as instruments for God. They disclaim all idea of helping in any other way. "Being helped, we help—comforted, we comfort." Looking, with John the Baptist, to Jesus for help, we say, with him, to you, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

2. But God is our "help in trouble." Why look for help hither and thither, where it cannot be found, to the neglect of Him who alone can help effectually? Only think, if in your trouble you could have the richest of men come and help to relieve your poverty, and the strongest of men to minister to your bodily weakness, and the wisest of men to counsel you in perplexity, you would deem it a privilege and a favour. That you cannot have; and even that, if you could have it, might prove very insufficient help. But here you may have God, in all the riches of His grace; God, in all the energy of His almighty power; God, in all the wisdom of His omniscience, to be your "help in trouble." And that not a God afar off, but "present," close at hand, ready to dwell and work in you, speaking to your heart, applying to your soul His divine consolations and support. "Under me are the everlasting arms." Yea, you may find God "a very present help in trouble."

You observe the climax of goodness: God is "a help,"—God is "a present help,"—God is "a very present help in trouble." Can language be more expressive? Can heart desire more? Yet this God is to His faithful people. The Psalmist is not raising an altar "to the unknown God,"—he is not delivering an untried theory,—he is speaking his own experience, and that of the faithful in all ages. He speaks as their representative; they (as it were) commissioned him to be their spokesman, and this is their united testimony: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

It would be easy, brethren, to illustrate this from the dealings of God with His people, as recorded in Scripture. Did time permit, I could delight to show how Abraham, so tried and troubled, was yet so comforted of God; how Jacob, who at one time exclaimed, "All these things are against me," would now testify, "All these things were working together for my good;" how David, so persecuted by Saul, was so preserved by the providence, and comforted by the grace of God; how New Testament saints join in with more ancient believers to swell the concert of praise to a faithful, covenant-keeping God, as their "refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." But I rather want your testimony; I long for you all so to know God in your present and future trouble.

Some of you are in trouble now. It is quite enough to tell you so ; there is no need of describing the trouble which at this time presses and oppresses so heavily. And now, I ask you, Do you know our God ? You have heard of Him, I know, "by the hearing of the ear," as who among us has not ? But do you know Him by your own faith and experience, as "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble ?" Can you not tell ? If overtaken by a storm, you would know if you had found and entered a refuge. Have you fled from the storm to God in Christ Jesus as your sole refuge ?

Is God your strength ? Is your dependence not in nature's strength, which is but another name for weakness, but is it in the God of all grace ? Do you obey the exhortation of St. Paul to Timothy—"My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus ?" Do you look to the Holy Spirit, to give you strength in the inner man ?

And is God your "help," your "very present help in trouble ?" Surely you do know—surely you can testify. Some treat all experience in religion as something doubtful, uncertain, and merely a fond persuasion, or an enthusiastic fancy ; but a man must know if he does find God "a very present help in trouble." He must know if, as he felt the trouble, he did look to God, did exercise faith in Christ, did pray for the Holy Spirit, did find relief, and comfort, and effectual help in his God.

Yes, and some must know, if they cannot say they ever did, that they trusted in some other refuge. The Scripture speaks of them making lies their refuge. They relied on themselves for strength ; they sought help from man in trouble ; they tried to divert their minds by amusements ; they endeavoured to run away from their troubles. But I will not remind you of all that ; I invite all such to begin, from this day and hour, to know God in Christ, in all these endearing relations—yea, as "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

Would any such ask—"How shall we begin ?" Our subject suggests:—

(1.) First, come to "God our refuge." That is really your first need—to escape from that terrible storm of trouble, ready to burst on the head of every unsheltered sinner. Remember Christ, as our "Shading-place from the wind," and our "covert from the storm ;" remember that He would have gathered Jerusalem's children under His wing, when the Roman eagle His eye foresaw would be ready to pounce on them for their destruction. Christ foresees that storm of vengeance on unpardoned sinners ; and He invites all who are such to come unto Him, and be safe under the shadow of His wings. Oh ! let your other troubles lead you to think of this, your greatest coming trouble.

(2.) Do ye feel too weak to reach your refuge ? Think of God "our strength." Pray for the energetic power of His blessed Spirit blessing His word of invitation, and forming in you that principle of faith whereby the sinner, in his sins, may go to Christ, in His saving merit and power. And then henceforth, in every trouble, let God be, as He so kindly offers Himself, "a very present help."

Are tried believers in trouble ? Let them seek that full experience of God and His grace, which will swell and deepen their testimony to Him, as their "refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Remember, dear brethren, your experience is not only for your own life and comfort, but also for the attraction of strangers to Christ, for the encouragement of weaker brethren, for the edification of the whole church of the faithful, and to glorify the all-sufficient grace of God.

Abide ye, then, in Christ, your safe refuge. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." Glorify God in the fires of tribulation. Treasure up



past and present experience for future encouragement. Trust God also for others—for all your fellow believers. Encourage all the faithful to join their testimony with yours—"God is our strength." Remember Martin Luther, who, when he and his brother reformers were in some new trouble, things seeming to go against them, used to exhort Melancthon and the rest, "Come, let us sing the 46th Psalm." And he made a note, I have been told, against this Psalm, in the margin of his Psalter—"This is my comforting Psalm." So in our day, in the progress of our revived reformation, when the clouds sometimes look dark, and some friends prove faithless, and others faint, let us refer to this comforting Psalm—yea, let us, in all our troubles, betake ourselves to our God in Christ, and ever find in Him our sure "refuge," our all-sufficient "strength," and our "very present help in trouble."

# A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. JOHN ANGELL JAMES.

PREACHED IN MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, BIRMINGHAM,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPT. 12, 1847.

On occasion of the Anniversary of the Chapel.

*“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”—Galatians vi. 7—10.*

THE language of Holy Scripture is strikingly beautiful. Its metaphors, however, are intended less for embellishment than for instruction, less to please the imagination and gratify the taste, than to inform the judgment, to impress the heart, and to assist the memory. They are usually drawn from sources with which we are very familiar, so that the truth which they contain strikes us almost at first sight, aided as it is by the illustration afforded. These metaphors are very frequently taken from agricultural and pastoral occupations, because the Jews were more devoted to them than to commercial pursuits. In the text, we have the process of sowing and reaping alluded to in order to set forth some momentous truths; and, for my own part, I know not, in the whole range of Holy Scripture, a more instructive or impressive passage than that to which I now invite your serious attention.

I shall consider, in the first place, the solemn caution with which the text commences; secondly, the very instructive and impressive affirmation which we find in it; and, lastly, the practical inferences to be deduced from the whole subject.

I. In the first place, let us, meditate on the solemn caution, with which this passage is introduced. “Be not deceived.”

Self-deception on any subject is a state of mind to be deprecated, but to be deprecated just in proportion to the importance of that on which the delusion is entertained. To be self-deceived as to the state of one's health, or the condition of our worldly affairs, is in each case to be placed in a position greatly to be lamented—it entails much mischief, prevents much good; but to be self-deceived in moral and religious matters, to be self-deceived, in this point of view, in reference to a single action, may in many instances entail very painful consequences. This it is to confound good and evil, to “call good evil and evil good, to put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.” To be deceived as to the state and habit of the soul, in reference to God, religion, and eternity, how awful is this form of delusion! Now this is possible. Scripture never unnecessarily puts us to pain by any of its illustrations; it does not excite groundless fears, jealousies, and apprehensions. This would be contrary to the benevolence of its Divine Author. If, therefore, we find such cautions as that to which I am now referring, and especially if we find them repeated as we do frequently, we must be convinced that there is a danger of self-deception, not only as to the quality and character of certain actions, but as to our own safety. It is possible to be self-deceived; and the

very possibility, when we consider the consequences which hang on this question, should arouse our solicitude, and send us all to our Bible, to our closet, and to our heart.

Not only, however, is self-deception possible, but it is probable and common. And if, in the time when persecution raged, and when it might have been supposed that no man would make a profession of Christianity till he had searched to the bottom, and felt absolutely sure that all was right—if even when the cross stood between a man and his fellowship with the church of Christ, and it was necessary to grasp that in order to come into communion with God's people, many were self-deceived; how much greater is the danger now, when it costs a man very little to make a profession of religion; when, so far from calling upon him to make a sacrifice, Christianity raises him in the estimation of his friends; when evangelical religion has become so common that it seems to throw a lustre, rather than obloquy, over the individual who professes it! Brethren, "be not deceived;" for there is imminent danger of this in such times as those in which we live.

Now the text represents this self-deception as impious. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." The word "mocked" has not here the meaning which we usually apply to it in reference to our intercourse with each other; it does not signify anything derisive, or positively insulting, but it means an attempt (how useless an one you know, considering that the Deity is omniscient,) to impose upon God by a false profession. "God is not mocked" by a mere imitation of religion; He cannot be mocked; He can detect the hypocrite by a glance of His searching eye.

Now the self-deception spoken of in the text has reference, I think, to one development of human depravity, one phase, or appearance, of the corruption of human nature; I mean that which is put forth in covetousness. You will see that this is the connection. "Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things." There is no vice against which professors of religion have more need to be put upon their guard, or in reference to which they have more need to examine themselves, than that of covetousness. This vice assumes so many shapes, wears so many coverings, advances so many plausibilities in excuse for itself, that it maintains its position, even where, through the deceit of the human heart, and the delusion to which I have already referred, it is scarcely supposed to exist. No matter how orthodox a man's sentiments may be; no matter how long and fervent his prayers; no matter how rich his supposed experience; if his heart be under the influence of the love of the world, if he be a covetous man, he is not, he cannot be, a Christian. But this vice is not easy of detection; for while we can define drunkenness and sensuality, and can tell the exact point where these commence, we cannot so easily define covetousness, or tell where that commences. But, brethren, this very incertitude, this very difficulty, should make us more anxious about the matter. A sin to which we are sometimes tempted, but which it is very difficult to define and detect, is that sin against which we should be most anxious to pray and to guard.

The text, however, points to a special manifestation of covetousness, namely, in reference to the teaching of the Word: "Let him that is taught in the Word, communicate unto him, that teacheth in all good things." Now, my brethren, I never can assent to the idea that the ministers of the Gospel are ecclesiastical paupers—spiritual beggars. There is a law repeatedly referred to in the Word of God in reference to their support. We have here such a reference: it is an appeal to justice and to gratitude at the same moment. "Let him that is taught in the Word;" let him who has received all the benefits of the Christian ministry, who, peradventure, has been converted by it, who has a thousand times been comforted, who is progressively sanctified by it, and who, through it, as one of the

means of help on the road, is going on to everlasting glory,—let him, as a matter of justice and gratitude, who has received these good things, communicate of his temporal substance to the man through whom he has obtained such spiritual assistance.

II. Self-deception is useless ; and this leads me to the second head of discourse on which I mean to dwell, namely, the instructive and impressive affirmation or declaration which the apostle here makes : “ Be not deceived ; God is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

Now here, as I have already hinted, the allusion is to the processes of agriculture in sowing and reaping ; and the general principle is laid down, that like produces like. If a man would have wheat, he must sow wheat and not barley ; if he sow barley, he will have barley. “ Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Here comes out one of the most solemn and impressive views of human life, that either the inspired Word, or any inspired man, ever presented. Human life is, in the Word of God, variously represented ; but where shall we find any representation more instructive or impressive than the idea—it is a seed-time ? Human life is man’s seed-time for eternity. We are “ fearfully and wonderfully made ;” we are more “ fearfully and wonderfully ” situated. Here we are always sowing ; in eternity we shall be always reaping.

And what is the seed ? Our thoughts, our feelings, our purposes, our plans, our words, our actions ; and, as we are always thinking, feeling, purposing, planning, speaking, or acting, except when under the power of sleep, so we are always sowing for eternity. What millions of thoughts, and feelings, and words, and actions, enter into the history of a single year ! and all these have a moral character, a moral bearing, and are being “ sown ” for eternity. It is not only to religious matters that this observation applies, but to the transactions of the world. There is a moral character belonging to our every-day conduct. The man in the shop, the man in the bargain, the man in the transaction, is acting under a moral influence : there is a motive in his mind influencing him for good or for evil ; there is seed being sown. This moral character does not belong merely to the greater actions and transactions of life, but equally to the lesser. There may be as much moral character in a pecuniary transaction over a shilling, as in one over a thousand pounds. So that there is a moral character stamped upon almost all that we are engaged in doing ; and consequently there is a sowing in many actions which we think little about ; there is that attending each which makes it a moral and eternal agent.

But we must descend to particulars. Here are two kinds of seeds and two kinds of crops spoken of. We will take each of these in order. “ He that soweth to the flesh.” By the word “ flesh ” I understand the corruptible nature which we have inherited from Adam through the fall, so called in many parts of the Word of God ; in other words, the unrenewed, unsanctified nature of man. I do not understand the words of the text as limited to the grosser corruptions of human nature, but as meaning the unrenewed, unsanctified part of human nature. Therefore “ sowing to the flesh ” is living and acting upon no higher principles than are found in the flesh, living and acting under the influence of no higher principles than those which are discovered in man’s unrenewed, unsanctified nature. I do not limit the expression, as I have already intimated, to the indulgence of the grosser sensual appetites. It is true that this is “ sowing to the flesh ” in the fullest and most degrading sense of the term ; and all who are thus living are “ reaping,” even in the present world, “ corruption.” Stand forth, ye victims of concupiscence ! ye martyrs of intemperance ! and let your hideous visages, your diseased constitutions, your trembling knees, your horrified minds, proclaim the truth of God’s declaration, “ He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.”

There they are, reaping daily the consequences of their sins before the eyes of all who have an opportunity of observing them. But this does not exhaust the meaning of the text. The "reaping" refers to another world rather than the present, and it intimates what will be the result as regards all those who live upon no higher principles than those of human nature. The man who does not love God and holiness; the man who has no repentance and no faith in Christ, whatever else he may be, however amiable, however upright in many respects, is yet "sowing to the flesh," and "shall of the flesh reap corruption." His whole nature will be one constant manifestation of moral corruption; the semblances of virtue which he had on earth will all disappear, and his soul, having had no principles of holiness sown in it in this world, shall produce no fruit of holiness in the world to come. He shall "reap corruption;" punishment of sin, and, as I will presently show you, punishment in sin.

This is the first kind of seed; we now go on to the second. "He that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." By "sowing to the Spirit" is meant, of course, that process of conduct which begins in regeneration by the Spirit of God and goes forward through the successive stages of sanctification. It is living anew by the power of the Spirit, and walking according to this new light; as the apostle says in the latter part of the preceding chapter, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." This is "sowing to the Spirit;" a course of life which is directed by the teaching of the Spirit in the Word and assisted by the power of the Spirit in the heart; in other words, a holy life. It is in allusion to this that the apostle says, in the sixth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, "Ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." So in our text he says, "He that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." We are so familiar with the language of Scripture, that we are not sufficiently impressed with its grandeur, and do not feel as we should its power; just as people who dwell in Alpine regions are not so sensible of the altitude of the peaks around them as strangers who see them for the first time. Oh! brethren, where out of this blessed Book was the phrase "everlasting life" ever found? Where beyond the minds into which it was put by that Book, was that grand conception ever cherished in the history of the world? Everlasting life, eternal existence with all that can render existence blessed!—there is a compass in this, which can be grasped by none but the infinite God. We shall never be able to comprehend the term,—no, not in eternity itself; the conception is too vast for created intellect. This is to be the result of a life of piety—eternal existence, with all that can render existence blessed! And the crop is certain. We cannot say that of the earthly seed. Till the harvest is in the barn, however good may have been the soil, however skilful the agriculture, it is not safe; insects, men, beasts, or the weather, may destroy it. But this eternal crop is sure. No insect, no beast, no man, no weather, can have any power over it. "He that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Now before we go on to the practical inferences, there are three thoughts which appear to me to arise out of this part of the subject.

First, our connection with the invisible and eternal world is more close and more intimate than we generally feel. Everything connects us with eternity; every word, every thought, every feeling, every action, which has a moral character, connects us with eternity. We are not only travelling to it, we are incessantly upon its very confines.

A second thought which arises out of this passage is, that the misery and happiness of men in another world do not proceed exclusively from Divine appointment, but also from the very nature of things, from man himself, what he is, and what he does. Just think what it is that the sinner carries into eternity. Himself! Ah! there is a word. But what is included in that self? All his intellectual faculties and all his mental dispositions.

Think of his taking his faculties with him. There will be his judgment, and that judgment will be illuminated with a clear understanding of all those things which he neglected in the present world. Think of light coming in upon the lost sinner's mind as to the character of God, whom he disobeyed, the spirituality, purity, and glory of the laws which he trampled under foot, the grace of the Gospel which he set at naught, and even as to the sin which he committed. Think of his intellect being enlightened as to the true character of all these objects. Next think of the curse of memory. He will forget nothing that he has done in this world; he will, as it were, live his life over again for ever and ever; all his sins will pass in review, all his actions, all his evil thoughts. What a sting was there in Abraham's words, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things;" throwing back memory to the past! Thus will it be in eternity with the sinner. Half the flames of the bottomless pit would be extinguished in that moment which witnessed the extinguishing of the sinner's memory, a large portion of whose punishment will arise from the recollection of what he has done. His conscience! Oh! what will it be to have the reproaches, accusations, and stings of that fearful monitor for ever and ever! Then his misery arises out of himself. He carries his faculties and dispositions with him; he is the same man in another world as he was here, not only as to existence, but also as to character. Those feelings which he entertained here will continue; he will have all the same dispositions, and no object to gratify them; be the subject of an eternal craving, with nothing by which the raging appetite can be appeased. Then how true is what I have said, that, besides the infliction of Divine punishment on the sinner, he is his own curse. The spirit goes into eternity pregnant with her own curse! Who would desire this? Rather who would not desire escape from it?

But I turn from this painful subject, to remark that the happiness of the good man will also arise from himself. Why, it does so here. Men have been mistaken in supposing that happiness here arises from anything but the disposition of him who enjoys it. The good man will carry with him his faculties and dispositions. His memory and judgment will be ever pressing back upon the past; his affections will be all called into activity and seen in proper exercise. He carries with him two things in the way of disposition—love to God and love to his brethren. Perhaps many of you never properly understood what was intended by the law. It was not merely intended to make you holy, but to make you happy. "The law is good;" in its place, it is as good as the Gospel. What can be better than a law which commands man to love God supremely, and his neighbour as himself? I know not how it strikes you, but I cannot conceive of a higher or richer heaven than one in which there is perfect love to God and perfect love to man. I want no higher heaven than this. Let every feeling be gone from my heart which is opposed to perfect love to God and perfect love to man; let me have charity in perfection and entire devotedness to the service of God, and I have attained all that I can conceive as necessary to the happiness of our nature. The good man carries these with him to heaven, and for this reason the future is more closely connected with the present than he himself often imagines. Let all that stands opposed to absolute holiness disappear, and then must he be happy. And what is holiness but perfect love?

A third thought arising from this passage is, that there must be different degrees of glory in heaven. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," both as to quality and as to quantity. A man cannot expect a very large crop of wheat, though he sow wheat, if he do not sow in proportion. Now there are some good people who have doubts about this. Nothing can be more clearly revealed; and we are not to raise up any conception of our own against the testimony of God's Word. Besides, are there not different degrees of punishment for the wicked? If not, what is the meaning of our Lord's

words : " That servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes ? " This refers to the infliction of Divine punishment on the wicked. Nothing can be clearer, than that punishment is to be of various degrees, and that every man who is cast out from the presence of God into a state of punishment, will receive a punishment proportioned to his sin. The apostle, speaking of the heathen, says, " For as many as have sinned without law," that is, without revelation, " shall also perish without law ; " that is, by the light of reason or conscience, whatever it may be ; " and as many as have sinned in the law," that is, under revelation, " shall be judged by the law," every man receiving according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Well, then, by parity of reasoning, if the wicked be punished in various degrees, the righteous will be blessed in various degrees. Heaven is not a place, into which all who are not punished, will simply be thrust without any subsequent distinctions. It is a place of proportion,—a proportion arising from the fact that if we sow, according to the quality, as well as the quantity of the sowing, shall we gather in the other world. I believe, that so intimate is the connexion between the present world and the future, that there is not a moral action performed but what has some influence upon eternity. It puzzles some to conceive how we can be perfect, if there are degrees of happiness in heaven. My dear friends, there need be no puzzle here. Is not happiness shared between minds in this world, to a certain extent, in proportion to their capacity ? A man of larger intellect and more enlightenment than another has a larger comprehension, a wider range of view, richer enjoyment. And can we not conceive that principle carried out in the celestial world ? All vessels may be full, perfectly full, but all vessels may not be of equal capacity. There may be a consciousness in an individual that he is perfectly happy, and yet there may be much in the circumstances of another to give a much wider range, not only of intellectual apprehension, but also of enjoyment. Moreover, for aught we can tell, there may be a graduated scale of social existence in heaven, and there may be different elevations there one above another. But would not that excite envy ? On earth, where there is so much corruption, it would, but not in heaven, where there is none. Besides, are there not different gradations of rank and station in the world which do not excite the smallest degree of envy, and why then, should not differences exist in another world ? It is revealed that there are differences, and I, for one, believe that the different degrees of glory stated in Scripture to exist in another world are not to be received as a mere theological dogma, but to be employed as a topic in urging on to greater degrees of holiness here. I am quite aware of the expression of humility, " Let me be within the threshold of heaven, and I am content." My brethren, I want to be a little nearer the throne than that. I know that to be within the threshold is infinitely more than I deserve ; but I want to glorify my Lord in heaven with the greatest power and capacity of which my nature is capable. It is no Pelagianism, it is no departure from humility, it is no setting up of justification by works, to urge others to good conduct here, in order that they may attain to greater degrees of glory hereafter. The apostle uses this very argument, and for a very practical purpose, in the ninth chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians, where he says, " He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly ; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully."

III. I now come to the third head of discourse,—or the practical inferences arising out of all that I have said. " Let us not be weary in well doing : for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

If it be true that we are to reap according as we sow, then let us sow. What? "Good." "Let us do good unto all men." The word "good" has both a generic and a specific meaning. It may mean the whole range of moral excellence. Justice, truth, and chastity are all included in the word "good." But the specific meaning which it bears in the New Testament is beneficence. To "do good," is to benefit our fellow-creatures. This is the meaning of the passage which perplexes some readers—"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." The "righteous man" is here the just man, the man who pays his debts, giving to every one his due. The "good man" spoken of, is the man who is beneficent, or who endeavours to benefit his fellow-creatures. This, brethren, is our vocation, not only to be good, but also to do good. That professor does not understand his calling who does not recognize the fact that he was converted to "do good." The Bible knows nothing of selfishness; the Bible condemns all such feelings. It is by doing good that we place ourselves in opposition to Satan, who is emphatically "the evil one;" it is in doing good that we resemble God, and are conformed to the image of Him of whom it is simply and beautifully said, "He went about, doing good."

Now the text presents us with the objects of our benevolence; first the church, next the world. We are to "do good unto *all men*." National antipathy, secular prejudice, and the hostility of man to man, are all condemned in the Word of God. Universal philanthropy is the glory of Christianity. There is nothing like clanship; there is no prejudice of colour; there is no hating of our fellow-man because he is separated from us by a strait, a mountain, or a river, or because he is of another colour. The Bible tells me that God "made of one blood" all men that He made to dwell on the face of the earth; that I am debtor to every man, and that I am to avail myself of every opportunity of doing good unto all. Upon this principle rest our missionary societies and all our institutions for evangelising our own country and the world at large. This is "doing good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." A few years ago there arose, as many of you know, a spurious philosophy, which, instead of applying itself to society as it exists, proposed to construct a system of universal benevolence on the ruins of human independence. As if we could love the whole species the more through loving each part of it less! The order of nature is to begin with particulars and then proceed to generals, and the last and richest fruit of private affection is general philanthropy. Therefore, brethren, we are to begin with ourselves; we are to "love our neighbours as ourselves," and to work outward until we reach the extremities of human society. The men of religion, the "household of faith," have, of course, the first claim on our affections, because they stand in the nearest and most sacred relationship to us. But this is to be the rule of our benevolence—"As ye have opportunity." Opportunity is the flower of time; and it must be gathered while its fragrance and beauty are fresh upon it, or it will soon wither and decay, and be lost for ever. Opportunity is a fine, a noble word. Who of us has not felt the sting of that simple confession—"I have lost my opportunity?" Ah! how will that sound in eternity? "I have lost my opportunity!" Do not lose *your* opportunity. You have it now; mind that you seize it. "As you have opportunity" too, get good. There is neither doing good nor getting good beyond the grave. "Be mindful of opportunity," said a Grecian sage; and here the apostle utters a similar exhortation. Life is opportunity. We shall do no good, in the same way at least, after we have passed from this world; we shall save no soul, relieve no misery, so far as we know, hereafter. Though we can hardly suppose that eternity will pass away without some acts of benevolence on the part of God's people, in some region or other of His universe, yet in the way of saving souls, or relieving misery, our opportunities, as far as we know, are confined to this world. It is said of an eminent philanthropist, that being once called upon by.



some individual, who made application for his bounty, the good man drew a cheque, and immediately afterwards took up a letter which was brought to him. When he read the letter, his countenance became moved, and he asked the individual who had obtained the cheque to give it him back, as if he had altered his mind in consequence of some intelligence which he had just received. Instead, however, of withdrawing or diminishing his liberality, he drew a cheque for double the amount, saying, "I have just received intelligence of the loss of a ship, which was not insured. For aught I know, God is about to take from me my property, and I will at least do good with it while I can." This was being mindful of opportunity. In this world the list of casualties is very numerous. Let us, therefore, persevere in benevolence; let us "not be weary in well-doing."

It may be objected that the calls upon benevolence are so numerous. The more the better; it shows that the world is improving, that God is calling us to great and noble actions. 'But some Christians,' it may be said, 'do not do their share.' Never mind. Every man sustains an individual relationship to God. If there be some who do not do their duty, that is no reason why you should not do yours. 'But,' it may be urged, 'the objects of my benevolence are so ungrateful.' It may be so; if you look for reward in your fellow-creatures, even in the beneficiaries who have received your kindness, you are likely to be disappointed. But every good action has its own reward. A good action can never be lost, if performed from a right motive. If it produce no fruit here, still there is a harvest to come. The seed may be invisible in this world, but it will spring up and produce fruit in the next. Let us not then, I repeat, be "weary in well doing." This is the promise attached to our benevolence, "In due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not." If, neither disheartened nor discouraged, we go on to the end; if, after devoting to the work the ardour of youth, the strength of manhood, we give to it the experience of old age; if we acknowledge, and act upon the acknowledgment, that in this warfare there is no dismissal from the field, but that we must conquer or die; if we recognise the principle that we must not leave our post even when the shades of evening are gathering around us, and if we feel that the last throb and the last pulsation of our hearts must be devoted to God, then, brethren, shall we reap; then we cannot fail to reap. But it will be "in due season"—not altogether in this world. There is something to be gathered here; the waving sheaf is often seen on earth; but the harvest is to be gathered in a better world. Oh, there is a day coming when the labourers shall be gathered from every department of action, they that plough, they that sow, and they that reap. What a gathering will it be! Prophets and apostles, martyrs and reformers, ministers and missionaries, Sunday school teachers and tract distributors, all who have learnt their duty and striven to perform it in the right spirit, shall be there, with new powers of recognition, and enlarged ones of enjoyment; the Master, the great Master, shall be present, with all His servants—a number which no man can number;" and the song of cherubim and seraphim shall go on until, in the mansions of the blessed, is heard the universal shout, "Harvest home! harvest home!" May we, my brethren, be there!

"STAND FAST IN THE FAITH."

## A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. JAMES PARSONS.

PREACHED IN ISLINGTON CHAPEL,

ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, JUNE 23, 1847.

On occasion of the Re-opening of the Chapel after Repairs.

*"Stand fast in the faith."*—1 Cor. xvi. 13.

THERE is, my friends, as you all know, an indisputable and indissoluble connection between the principles and actions of men in the present state of existence, and their anticipations and prospects for the future. This is a cardinal truth in religion, the evidence of which is conclusive, and the importance of which is supreme; our personal recognition of it is claimed by every motive which can be urged upon intelligent beings; and any correct information, by which we may be guided to the safe and happy goal, will of course be hailed with great eagerness and delight. Such information, you are aware, is amply furnished to us in the course of the sacred writings, the grand design of which is so to illuminate the path of the present life, that those who read it may travel safely and rightly onwards, to the attainment of "glory, honour, and immortality." Any multiplication of citations to this effect would be superfluous; for when the exhortation, from which we now proceed to address you, is contemplated in its proper scope and connection, it will be found to convey tidings respecting human duties and interests, which will remove all obscurity, both from the mode of performing the one and of securing the other.

It was delivered, you will observe, by the inspired apostle, to those who by his instrumentality had been brought into an interesting and a delightful association with the Gospel of which he was the advocate, over whose transformed characters he had exulted, and whose welfare he endeavoured to promote and to secure, by untiring counsel and advice. Among various other exhortations there occurs the direction we have now read—"Stand fast in the faith;" a direction which was admirably adapted to the circumstances of those to whom it was addressed, and which will also be found to remain for the benefit of the church, unimpaired and undiminished in its value, to the end.

We purpose, as not inappropriate to the occasion which has convened you within these walls, to notice, in the first place, the object to which the exhortation relates; secondly, the state which the exhortation commends; and thirdly, the importance with which the exhortation is invested.

I. In the first place, let us observe the object to which the exhortation relates.

It is designated by the appellation of "the faith." And the reference here, you will understand, is not immediately to the principle of faith in the hearts of men, but to the system of religion which is comprehended in the Gospel. The Gospel is not unfrequently spoken of, in the sacred writings, under the appellation which is thus employed. Take the following examples: "A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith;" "Elimas the sorcerer withstood them, striving to turn away the deputy from the faith;" "Felix sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith;" "They heard that he who once persecuted us, now preached the faith;" "Some shall depart from the faith;" "He hath denied the faith;" "I have kept the faith." To these instances we add undoubtedly the one to which your attention is now addressed. Thus there is directly brought before you that illustrious economy, which is "glad tidings of great joy unto all people," which embodies within it alike the glory of God and the happiness of mankind, and which is to consummate the operations and the achievements of its mercy in the imperishable glories of heaven.

In connection with the designation which is thus supplied, we must request you to notice two remarks.

1. In the first place, the Gospel eminently demands the exercise of faith. It is called "the faith," clearly because it requires faith. Faith necessarily has relationship to a testimony; and the Gospel is a testimony of facts and principles, in regard to which faith must be exercised, in order that any salutary influence may be exerted, and that any delightful end may be secured. The exercise of faith upon the Gospel has especial regard to Him by whom it was established on the earth—the Lord Jesus Christ—especially comprehending His Divinity, His incarnation, and the works which in His incarnate state He performed. He is the great object of faith, and when men believe on Him they believe the Gospel. It may be sufficient to remind you here of the language of the record itself: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so shall the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life;" "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" "These things are written that ye might believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name;" "He that believeth on the Son shall not come into condemnation, but hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." To the citation of these announcements, what requires to be added? They may well be permitted to stand, in their imperial majesty, claiming the unreserved and entire submission of every intellect and every heart. The Gospel requires to be believed—faith being concentrated upon Him who is its author, its finisher, its first, and its last. See that you refuse it not; for remember, it will be at the peril of your souls.

2. We observe again here, that the demand of the Gospel upon the exercise of human faith is founded upon an unexceptionable and an authoritative title. And that title, my brethren, is simply the fact that the Gospel is a revelation from heaven. It was not arranged, or discovered, or presented, in consequence of contrivance or concert of human beings; it was, in the emphatic terms of Scripture, "made known" to them, delivered to them, handed down as a dogmatic communication from a superior power—a message with which they had no concern whatever, but to receive and embrace it. The Redeemer, whom it so amply reveals, Himself brought it down from the celestial habitations, and every department of it must be regarded as truly Divine. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past by the fathers unto the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son;" "who is the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person." The "great salvation" "at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him;" "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will." And an accumulated amount of evidence, arising from prophecy, from history, and from a number of other sources, renders to these high assertions a verdict of unanswerable truth, and again, brethren, convinces us that our faith is "not a cunningly devised fable," but that it is really "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." And it occupies a more commanding position, in regard to the intelligent universe, than any other in which even He could place it. Preceding dispensations of truth were intermediate and interlocutory, but this is to be regarded as the consummation and the seal of all. It gives the last announcements of the Divine councils, the last communications of the Divine will. He solemnly, and without the possibility of addition, consigned it to the interests of the world; and then, having rendered it, He retired (as it were) to the secret recesses of His Divine Majesty, His glory to shine, and His voice to be heard no more, until that glory shall reblaze and until that voice shall resound, amid the solemnities of the judgment-day. "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven: whose voice then shook

the earth : but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear : for our God is a consuming fire."

Thus, brethren, you observe the object to which the exhortation before us relates. It is the system or economy of religion comprised in the Gospel—an economy which requires faith from men, and whose demand for the exercise of faith rests upon an unquestionable and an authoritative title.

II. We must now proceed to notice, secondly, the state which this exhortation commends. "Stand fast in the faith."

It might be observed, that the various terms of which the verse before us is composed, appear to be derived from military affairs, and that those who were addressed in the exhortation were considered as though they were warriors engaged in conflict, and having to contend, according to certain important principles, against their adversaries, that they might successfully resist and overcome. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

Taking the exhortation as it appears in its own integrity, we request you to notice the following matters, as comprehended in the advice which it bestows.

1. And in the first place, this exhortation advises that there should be uncompromising adherence to the doctrines which the faith propounds. There are abroad, as you know, many agencies hostile to the Gospel of Jesus, and designed, if possible, to shake and to subvert the principle of faith in the hearts of those who have embraced it. There are the sceptical insinuations and arguments of unrenewed and hostile men around them ; there are the evil suggestions of their own minds, in which the elements of unbelief still continue to work ; there are the subtle and powerful efforts of the great adversary, who at any cost would bring once more his victims within his coils ; and these are constantly urging to a renunciation of the truths which were once regarded as the saving truths of God. The apostle was aware that agencies of this nature were largely operating among the persons who composed the church at Corinth ; and in the preceding chapter he notices one glaring error upon a most momentous subject, against which he constructs the wonderful argument contained in that chapter—the dogma being, that there is no resurrection of the dead : "How say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead?" In the same manner he gives similar advice to the other churches, of whose conversion he had been the instrument, precisely for the same reasons. Thus he advises the Galatians against those who would seduce them from the grand doctrine of justification by Christ : "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." He tells the Ephesians, as the great end of the Christian ministry, that it was "for the edifying of the body of Christ : till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ : that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive ; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ : from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." The Philippians he exhorts to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel." He entreats the Colossians, that they would "continue in the faith, grounded and settled, not being moved away from the hope of the Gospel,"—and adds—"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him : rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit." He reminds the Thessalo-

nians, that when he felt anxious on their account, and "could no longer forbear," he "sent to know their faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted them, and the labour of the apostle were in vain;" and when he had received the gratification that their faith was abounding, he tells them of his exultation, and adds—"Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord." My brethren, the import of these various exhortations is always necessary among the churches of Christ; and it must be most earnestly and anxiously impressed upon yourselves. Perhaps there never was a period, when it was more important that the professors of the Gospel of Christ should be urged to the cultivation of the stability which is now advised. We live in an age, in which the spirit of error is working with unexampled cunning, perseverance, and energy, attempting to draw away the votaries of the Gospel into a fatal infidelity on the one hand, or into an equally fatal superstition on the other. Not a few have had their faith subverted; and some, who once seemed to be eminent and established, have fallen basely and ignominiously into the snare. While thus the evil agent of falsehood is marching abroad, in proud and vaunted boasting, surely it becomes every true disciple of the Saviour to oppose him with uncompromising and unwavering firmness; and he who concedes one principle to his blandishments, he who follows for one moment in his train, he who enters for one moment into his temple, is guilty of a foul and traitorous wrong, against his own soul, against his religion, against his Saviour, and against his God. Adhere, then, my brethren, firm and unmoved by the altar, to which already you have dedicated your homage, and of which you were constituted the defenders, "determined to know nothing among men, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." In this manner "stand fast in the faith."

2. Again: while this exhortation advises uncompromising adherence to the doctrines which the faith propounds, it also advises a holy conformity to the precepts which the faith enforces. It is not, my brethren, for a moment to be imagined, that because our religion is designated by the familiar name of "the faith," it therefore comprehends nothing that is of a preceptive nature. In connexion with doctrinal principles, there are many moral institutes, intended to govern the affections, the conduct, and the actions of men, and to reduce all by whom the Gospel is professed to a holy conformity to Him from whom that Gospel came. It is necessary to remember, that the only accurate and established proof of a belief of the facts and doctrinal principles of the Gospel is to be obtained in a conformity to its moral institutes; and the conclusion can never be too clearly or too impressively affirmed, that where there is no obedience there is no faith. "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." It would be easy for us here to assure you, by specific citations from the language of the apostle and his companions, of the ample verification which has been rendered of this great fact; but we proceed now to remind you, that there are the same antagonist agencies against the cultivation of holiness as there are against the cultivation of faith, and that to resist and overcome these there must be much of vigilance, of self-denial, and of courage, vigorously and constantly employed. For the votaries of the Gospel, when they are assailed by the principles of evil, to overcome the suggestions of temptation, to "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts," and to "keep themselves unspotted from the world,"—this, my brethren, is true heroism—that highest victory of faith, by which the world and "the god of this world" is made to be overcome. Let it be your object to exhibit that heroism, to accomplish that victory for yourselves, and to "adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things." "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed in the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things." Let the graces of practical piety exist in a course of constant advance and progression, becoming more and more vigorous, exalted and refined, until in the maturity of holiness you terminate your career on earth, and become the inheritors of that state where you will dwell for ever in the perfect likeness of God. Forget not, that by this consistent and holy conformity to the precepts of your religion, there is another and an important method of "standing fast in the faith."

3. Again: you will observe that this exhortation also advises a zealous advocacy of the claims which the faith possesses. We are informed that our religion is designed for wide-spread diffusion among the nations of the earth, and intended, by the exercise of faith, to gather them in innumerable multi-

tudes, for the enjoyment of everlasting salvation. We know also, that this great end is to be accomplished by the instrumentality of those who already have believed, and that they are to "stand fast in the faith," or in behalf of the faith, by proclaiming its excellencies and by insisting upon its embrace, as necessary that it may receive its rightful tribute, and that it may gain its rightful triumph. This department of Christian duty was that in which the apostle was so devotedly and constantly engaged, and in which he "counted not his life dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God;" this is the work for which the Christian ministry in all ages has been raised and sustained, and this is the work in which every individual Christian ought to find his duty and his delight. My brethren, we must regard ourselves as being set apart for this department of obligation and of labour; we must be "stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord;" we must consider that we are enlisted, by the Captain of salvation, under his banner, as warriors to go forth against the powers of evil, contending against them in one eternal and unmitigated fray, until the conflict shall end by the overturning of all the impostures which have saddened and crushed the happiness of the nations, and giving to the Lord himself the "many crowns" which He shall wear in token of His universal dominion. If the age in which we live requires our personal stability and our personal consistency, it does also equally require our ardent and zealous advocacy of the religion we have embraced. Are we not, my brethren, summoned to it, by the remarkable facilities which are now presented to us for the diffusion of the Gospel among the nations of the earth? Are we not summoned to it, by the zealous and the persevering efforts of those who are the advocates of falsehood? And if they, in our own and other lands, are engaged in the constant promulgation of error, does it not become us to be at least equally zealous in the promulgation of what we know to be the truth? I would ask you for yourselves, now that you are entering on another sphere of Christian occupation and exertion, to see to it that by your inertness and listlessness the Gospel and the souls of men suffer not; and let us, my brethren, all remember, that it becomes us, in our different spheres of action, to cultivate that ardour which burned in the heart of our blessed Redeemer, and which animated the noblest men whose names are canonized in the annals of our religion. Ours ought to be a zeal which burns alike brightly in the secret chamber, on the social hearth, and in the public assembly—an ardour which should animate the head of age and the heart of youth—an ardour which should increase and grow, and suffer no decline, until the bosom in which it is hid shall be consumed of the sepulchre, and itself transferred to another world, where it shall cause the soul to stand as a burning seraph before the throne of God and of the Lamb. Thus, brethren, "stand fast in the faith."

You will now observe, in the three particulars we have illustrated, what must be regarded as the amount of the exhortation before us; uncompromising adherence to the doctrines which the faith propounds, holy conformity to the precepts which it enforces, and zealous advocacy of the claims which it possesses.

III. See now, the importance with which this exhortation is invested.

Many of the exhortations which have already been presented for your attention are sufficient to illustrate the essential importance of the advice which is before us; but we may be permitted to engage your attention while we present some specific considerations, by which (especially to Christian minds) that importance will quickly and palpably appear.

1. And first observe, that the exhortation is thus important because only by complying with it due honour can be rendered to the excellency of the Gospel. The system which came down from God, is emphatically worthy of God. Who can examine into the institutes of our religion, without perceiving that in them all excellency is embodied and dwells? It is a perfect combination of sublimity and of mercy, of grandeur and of grace. We wonder not that it has been called a "treasure"—we wonder not that it has been termed "a Pearl of great price"—we wonder not that it is regarded as embodying "the unsearchable riches" of redemption; we may well apply to it the language which the wisest man has used in commemoration of wisdom—"The merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to

them that lay hold upon her : and happy is every one that retaineth her." No influence can be exerted in her favour, which is not fraught with benignity and with blessing ; and not a few are now in the presence of God who know, by the events of their own history, that the power of religion upon their hearts is the commencement of a renovating process, by which human nature is to be conducted finally to the highest and noblest dignity which it is possible for the finite to attain. Brethren, when you examine, as you may and ought, at your own leisure, the nature of the system which we now advocate, and the claims which we now impress, you must be aware that all you can render to your religion, in your intellect, in your emotions, and your natural powers, must be at best vain and unavailing. Would you in nowise compromise or sacrifice the honour of the religion to which you are attached—would you render to it the tribute which, under the influence of vital piety upon you, you would be able to render, so that you might fulfil the claims and honour the religion to which you and your fellow men are infinitely indebted ?—seek for the constraining influence of the love of Christ, by which you shall judge that " if one died for all, then were all dead, and that He died for them, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again."

2. Secondly, this exhortation is also important, because only by complying with it can men perceive and appropriate the enjoyments of personal religion. We have already adverted to the importance of maintaining with unwavering firmness the doctrinal principles of the religion we profess ; and it is very remarkable, how the apostle has defended one grand cardinal principle, to the preaching of which this and other sanctuaries in this city are dedicated—I mean the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ ; how he has connected the maintenance of that doctrine with the proof of personal religion—those who in anywise, and to the least extent, attempt to compromise it, at once placing in doubt the fact of their having been at all influenced by renovating grace ! You will remember how, in his epistle to the Galatians, he illustrates and enforces this truth. It appears that there were those who, while they did not deny, but held the doctrine of righteousness imputed by faith in the Saviour, were yet desirous of associating with it certain Jewish ceremonies—as though there were some amount of merit and of value in them. How indignantly does he repudiate the dogma ! and how does it teach us, brethren, to avoid the contaminating influence of those, in our own day, who to the smallest extent would put the observance of ceremonies on a footing with a personal appropriation of the blessings secured by the sacrifice of Christ ! After giving the exhortation, " Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free," he says—" I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law ; ye are fallen from grace." How needful, then, brethren, is it that your own faith should be pure, and that the manifestation of your faith in practical habits should always be distinct and decided ! Remember, that only as you abide in the truth, to the full extent in which it has been revealed, and with the full extent of conduct and habit to which reference has been made, can you be satisfied in your own hearts that you have the power of that grace which leads to final and eternal salvation. On the other hand, stability in the various modes in which it has been exhibited, with the corresponding holiness and activity of habit and deportment which the genius of our religion requires,—this will also be an instrument of imparting satisfaction and pleasure. In this state of " standing fast in the faith," there is a pleasure arising from a consciousness of reconciliation with God, and the witness of the Spirit bears its strongest testimony that you are numbered among His children. There is, again, a pleasure arising from a sense of your being engaged in advocating that system which, while it will advance the honour of the Divine Majesty, will at the same time impart matchless and imperishable blessings to multitudes of your fallen and perishing fellow-creatures ; and in this work you are tasting—

" The joy of God, to see a smiling world."

There is also a pleasure arising from a vivid hope and anticipation of heaven ; and as time advances onwards, and you have to contemplate, amidst many admitted imperfections, an earnest and a vigorous effort to " stand fast in the faith," beautifully cheered and encouraged by a sense of immortality open before you, you will look back upon the past with gratitude, and upon the future with buoyancy and with hope ; and well may you take up the language of the apostle, when in his last moments he uttered that beautiful epitome, both of the past, of the

present, and of the future—"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand : I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day : and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

3. Again : this exhortation is important, because only by complying with it can the welfare and final happiness of the world be secured. My brethren, without noticing any existing speculations upon the subject, it is our conviction, grounded on what we believe to be scriptural testimony, that God has finally committed the restoration of happiness to the world to the dispensation of the Gospel of His Son. We are not of course ignorant that there are those who speak of our religion as but a temporary dispensation, designed to bear a witness to the nations, and then to be supplanted by another economy, in which alone a reign of happiness is to be secured ; but if you look only to a single statement of the New Testament—I mean the language of the apostle Paul in the fifteenth chapter of his epistle to the Romans—you will there observe that he has cited a number of prophecies from the Old Testament, which are admitted as referring to the last age of peace and purity and happiness, as connected with that dispensation of which he himself was a minister, and intended manifestly to be fulfilled under it ; and it is very remarkable that the prophecies he has cited in this connection are the very passages which are cited by the votaries of the speculation we have referred to, as tending to support their imaginary new economy or dispensation. The passages to which we refer are those which may be found in the ninth and following verses of that chapter. He says—"that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promise made unto the fathers : and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy ; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to Thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto Thy name ;" this being a citation from the eighteenth Psalm. "And again He saith"—referring as you will observe here to the sixty-sixth Psalm, and the ninety-seventh, and others that follow—"Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people. And again"—quoting from the hundred and seventeenth Psalm—"Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles ; and laud Him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith," in the well-known prophecy contained in the eleventh chapter of his prophecies—"There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles ; in Him shall the Gentiles trust." And in connection with that statement, we read of an age when "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together ; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed ; their young ones shall lie down together ; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain ; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." You will observe from the citations we have made, that these various predictions are associated with the Gospel which we preach and which you believe ; and there is an immense amount of evidence, beyond and in connexion with his, to the same delightful effect—leaving us, brethren, to conclude that God has bound up the interests of mankind in the economy of His Son. It is under that economy, and by the preaching and zealous advocacy of the truth, that the Divine Spirit, who yet remains to be glorified, shall be "poured out upon all flesh," achieving the wonders of a new creation ; and it is under the same economy, and by the same administration, that the Saviour will "see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied," that He will appear as "King of kings and Lord of lords," and that He will have "dominion, and glory, and honour, and power," and a kingdom, that all people, and nations, and tongues may serve Him. My brethren, is it not momentous that the happiness of the world shall be secured, that superstition and imposture shall be annihilated, that impurity and iniquity shall be wiped away, and that that new and glorious period shall come, when truth and righteousness and joy shall reign over the whole of this once apostate and degraded world ? Then remember how momentous it is for the whole Christian church to rise to the performance of its duty, and to "stand fast in the faith."

We have endeavoured, my brethren, with great simplicity, to address you this morning, upon a topic which must manifestly be regarded as suitable to the occasion which has convened the stated worshippers of the Redeemer within these walls ; and it will be your determination henceforth to "stand fast in the faith"—cultivating doctrinal stability, in connection with doctrinal



correctness. Brethren, these changes in the histories of our sanctuaries must always come with solemn power upon our spirits. They are times for reflection, and they ought to be times for practical and powerful revival; and if any that were associated with this house of prayer in former times have reason to accuse themselves of worldliness, of lethargy, and of inertness, in connection with the profession of the truth, let them now seek for those new impulses, by which they shall arise to a higher and a loftier state of piety, and shine amidst the vast population around them as "lights in the world." My brethren, we must, one and all, cultivate more of the spirit of Christian devotedness—we must be "valiant for the truth" upon the earth; and while we have much to encourage us, and much to lead to hope and joy in anticipation, let us consider, in the ministry, and in the churches of Christ, our awful responsibilities to the glory of God, to the maintenance of His cause, and to the happiness of our fellow-men. Every minister now ought to hear the apostolic voice addressing him in deep and energetic tones—"I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" "Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry;" and to us there is the promise, that we shall "both save ourselves and them that hear us." And let every Christian man and woman remember the talent that is committed to his and her care, and use it for the best of masters, and for the best of ends; and when the conflicts of time have ceased and are over, we shall be permitted without exception to rise to a state where the glorified are to dwell for ever, and where He whom we have served will pronounce over us—"Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

And then, my brethren, it may be that those are present, by whom the Gospel of Christ has been hitherto rejected, or at least neglected. There are those here, who have neglected "this great salvation," who have not believed "the grace whereby they might be saved." My dear hearers, ponder for one moment—what is your condition? "He that believeth not," we are informed, "is condemned already." There is at present an exclusion from spiritual peace and joy, and there must be a final exclusion from the peace and joy which belong to a better world. You may perhaps, now be engaged in and animated by excitements which prevent you from feeling your need of the system presented this morning; but the time is at hand when you will need for yourselves a portion in the Gospel of Christ. You will need it in sorrow—and sorrow will have no balm and no comfort but what it derives from the consolations of the Gospel; you will need it in death—and the last hours of life will be dark and sad and heavy, if they have not to sustain and cheer them the precious promises of the Gospel. It is the Gospel alone which can extract the sting from death, and transform "the king of terrors" into a messenger in disguise. You will need it in judgment—and judgment will be terrific and overwhelming apart from it. Standing as you must, at the left hand of the great tribunal, owned and recognized as abusers of countless privileges and invaluable means of grace, you will then receive from "Him that sitteth upon the throne," the sentence of those "many stripes" and that "sorer punishment" which will overtake those who have "rejected the counsel of grace against themselves." My brethren, we are all travelling towards the period of our final account. Many solemn and certain warnings of the transient nature of our present existence lie around us; we know not when the summons shall arrive for ourselves, but come it must, and that speedily and soon. Why should we

"to the mercies of a moment leave  
The vast concerns of an eternal scene?"

Shall we not at once receive that Gospel which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," and be ready either for the work and service of time, or for the sufferings of departure—and then for the happiness of eternity? "Now is the accepted time, to-day is the day of salvation." "We are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

## THE MEDIATOR.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. RICHARD WINTER HAMILTON, D.D.

PREACHED IN ORANGE STREET CHAPEL,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 23, 1847.

On occasion of the Re-opening of the Chapel.

*"Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one."*—Galatians iii. 20.

WE cannot, dear Christians, think too spiritually of God. The strongest effort, the happiest attempt, is but a feeble approximation to the fact. Our clearest idea, our simplest abstraction, is but grossness and confusion. The infidel has esteemed himself most fortunate in the objection, and in dealing it has imagined that he has struck a staggering blow—"Did you ever see God?" That which could be seen, would not be God. He "is a spirit;" and therefore He cannot be sensibly perceived. He is infinite; but infinity does not admit of parts, nor can be reduced to proportions which might be bodily discerned. And therefore "the King eternal, immortal," must be "invisible." He is beyond the range of sensation; by a necessity, that is the absolute excellence and perfection of His nature.

We cannot conceive too holily of God. This being a moral quality, we can better weigh it than any of the phenomena of spirit or of illimitableness. Each one of us is able to discriminate between right and wrong:—He is infinite rectitude. Each one of us is able to discriminate between good and evil:—He is infinite benignity. And therefore, when we think of Him, we think of Him in His excellence and His perfection. These now take a moral relationship and bearing. Whatever is opposed to them, must be displeasing to Him; whatever is displeasing to Him, must be marked by His displeasure; and under a retributive system, the mark of displeasure must be the brand of punishment.

Herein consists the difficulty of access to Jehovah—the "spirit," the infinite, the righteous, the good. It is not so much how we may stand before the infinite Spirit himself, as how we may appear in the presence of that purity, before which the seraph veils his brow, and in comparison with which "the very heavens are not clean." Who can spring the crossway, which shall stride the awful void and gulf—which shall unite together these widest extremes? We are men—we are sinful men.

The question is, then, not—how shall majesty meet our meanness? so much as—how shall purity come into any contact with our pollution? And we might have been left to this hopeless state, cut off for ever from the Divine favour, friendship, and intercourse—without a way to God, and without a way from Him; without a way to find Him, and without a way to escape Him. He is not a man, like ourselves, that we should answer Him, or that we should stand together in judgment; "neither is there any daysman, that can lay his hand upon both."

But God has devised means, whereby His banished ones shall not be expelled from Him. And we must here take a distinction. There is an estrangement between every creature and his Creator; between the angel and his Maker—between man and his former. There is no blame-worthiness in that estrangement, or distance; it is mere disparity, and it arises out of the nature of things. But there is a moral, a spiritual alienation: "your sins have sepa-

rated between Me and you." Now the first disparity can never be altered—never dismissed; the distance between the Creator and the creature can never be less; but the moral and spiritual alienation may be repaired, and we who are far off may be brought nigh. And the text relieves every difficulty; it reduces and hushes all our fears to rest. There may be an intervention; the great and glorious God may conduct it; and He may bring it to an amicable result—so that once more we may catch His smile, and enjoy that favour which is life.

We cannot, however, disguise, that there are critical difficulties in the text. The doctrine is explicit, but the language is abrupt and elliptical: there is much to be supplied. "A mediator is not a mediator of one:" this is self-interpreted; we know it in the daily business of life—in its ordinary routine and course. If there be any difficulty or quarrel, and it is submitted to adjudication, he who adjudicates "is not of one;" he holds the well-poised balance between the two parties then in contest with each other. "But," it is immediately added—"God is one:" and there does not appear to be anything consequential in this statement; the parts do not seem to hang together. "A mediator is not a mediator of one:" all can understand it. "But God is one."

Two expositions are generally offered.

"God is one;" of one mind; inexorable; true to His glory, to His rectitude, to His laws. All this is indubitable; but it does not seem consonant to the spirit of the verse. Is He inexorable? How, then, may we expect mediation, or that mediation may be carried to success?

Another comment is this. "God is one:" He "is one" with all the good and with all the holy in the universe; He is in amity with them. But then our case suggests that which is painfully adverse; and "if God be against us, who can be for us?"—a right converse of that statement which we not unfrequently pronounce, and pronounce by inspired authority—"If God be for us, who can be against us?" To say, then, that if God be one He is inexorable—that if He be one He has only a complacent eye to the saintly and the upright—is to dash our hope, is to defeat our aim. "A mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one."

Then the "one" is to be understood in an unalterable way: personally "one," numerically "one." God alone is to be considered in this transaction. He not only mediates with us, but He mediates for us; He is on our side; He takes part with us. It is His single hand which achieves the issue; the whole depends upon Him, and is consummated by Him. Here He is to be viewed alone—in His wisdom, in His grace, and in His glory. Lo! He devises; and lo! He does it!

Without attending, then, any further to the exegesis of the text, let us consider the parties which are supposed; the Mediator who is provided to unite them; and the exclusive agency of Deity in the arrangement. And say the Spirit, who indited these words, "take of these things of Christ"—these precious things, these signal things, these transcendent things—"and show them unto us."

I. First, let us contemplate the parties supposed.

God is a necessary existence. He is a cause—for He wills to cause, to produce, to effectuate. And "He who made all things is God;" "He hath made us, and not we ourselves." We must consider Him in all His beauty, in all His fairness, in all His loveliness; not intermingling these with any sensuousness of thought, but with that which is most pure, most fitting, most agreeable. He is all that is right; He is all that is beneficent; He is all that is pure. But we must consider outwardly how others stand in reference to Him—others, who exist simply by His will; for whatever is without, is but His effect, His production. He has made worlds—He has made their inhabitants; He has therefore made ourselves.

But He is not only our Creator, and entitled therefore to our deference; He is not only entitled to our homage, as embracing in Himself all that He can exercise complacency upon, and all sources of ineffable bliss; but He is our Lawgiver—He is our King—He is our Judge. He has not given us an idle life—an insect's hour; we are not sent to crawl, like the reptile, upon the earth—ours is an active being. He exacts from us obedience, and upon our refusal does not, cannot hold us guiltless. We have, therefore, to regard Him

in His legislative character and aspect ; we have to think of the law—we have to think of its sanctions : and we must remember, that sanctions belong to law ; and if they be not enforced, they are but a mockery, a fraud, and a snare. God has therefore made us, and we are the creatures of accountability : moral agents—and so He deals with us ; moral agents—and so He respects us ; moral agents—and so He will adjudge us.

God is therefore seen in all His moral beauty, in all His spiritual loveliness, and also in His legislative aspect. Brethren, let us remember this party—so awful, so great ! It is to Him we must have respect, as it is with Him we have to do.

But there is another party. It is man. His claims are not to be refused. Claims he has : there is “ a portion of goods which falleth unto him.” He is reasonable, and he must be addressed through that reason ; he is free, and he must be constantly treated in his freedom : there must be nothing to outrage his reason, there must be nothing to coerce his freedom. And man is seen as a transgressor—wilful, determined : he has precipitated the sanction of the law and the wrath of the Lawgiver upon himself.

Now these parties are at variance. The one alleges wrong ; God has received it. You think you cannot affect His essence : it is true. How can you then derogate from His glory ? How can you wrong Him ? There is a “ glory due unto His name ;” He is grieved at its withholdment. But you may inflict a moral injury upon Him. There are vital points of human character and of human repute ; assail them—the character, the repute, are what they were ; but is not a wrong inflicted ? You belie the Divine truth ; you impugn the Divine rectitude ; you impeach the Divine goodness. Is not that a moral injury which you do to them ? And therefore it is said—“ By transgression of the law dishonourest thou God.” The dishonour put upon God by every sinful act of man, is that grievance, is that injury, and is the ground of that variance, touching which we speak. Man supposes wrong ; he deems that some injury is done him—that God might be more benevolent, and even more just. Man stands forth in the idle, in the fearful spectacle of one who arraigns the righteousness of his Creator and his Judge.

There must, then, be an antagonism of disposition, where there is such a state of variance. “ God is angry with the wicked every day.” You read of His fury—of His wrath—of His indignation. Analyse those terms ; lower them, subdue them, bring them to what you think they may admit. Is it only a settled, calm determination to punish the sin, and to pursue the sin upon the sinner ? We allow you all the abridgment : here is something far more to commend us than the counterparts of human passion—higher exasperation. Here is the declaratory will—here is the necessary will : “ He will in nowise clear the guilty.”

And man has his antagonism. Look into a human heart—any human heart—that which is most tender, that which is most amiable : “ The carnal mind is enmity against God.” You repel the allegation. You walk abroad amidst the landscape ; you love your Creator ; your heart expands and glows towards your Benefactor. Here is the paternal beauty—here is the paternal work ; and you are affected by a filial affinity and sympathy. An image of your own ! an idol ! a strange God ! You love your own device ; you depict and copy for yourselves the very God that you would have to be a God, and your God : but the God of truth, and without iniquity, who is just and right—you love Him not. “ Out of your own mouth we condemn you ;” for after the matter is so illustrated, you tell us, that were your idea of God such as our own, you would scorn, and must loathe Him. Ah ! the carnal mind, however tempered, however moulded, “ is enmity against God.”

And these are the litigants, as they enter the arena ; these are the foes, as they rush to the conflict. How unequal the encounter ! How inevitable the issue ! “ Hast thou an arm like God ? or canst thou thunder with a voice like Him ?” “ Will you set the thorns and the briers against Him in battle ? He will go through them ; He will burn them together.” Here is the case : God is angry with man—put your own construction upon that anger ; man is in hostility to God—put your own interpretation upon that hostility. God is against man ; man is against God.

Now if there be mediation, there arises a crisis. But whither may we look ? What angel shall stand our friend ? To which of the saints can we

turn? The whole is anticipated; the goodness of Scripture, of revelation, of Christianity, prevents all that is curious and inscrutable in the problem. A Mediator has been announced; he is involved in the very text—"A mediator is not a mediator of one." Then he would not stand for us. "A mediator of one," could the solecism be allowed, must only be the representation of infinite wisdom, and justice, and truth. There might come out the legate from the lawgiver; but what mediator could spring up from ourselves?

II. We are, therefore, graciously and mercifully anticipated; and we consider, in the second place, the Mediator who is provided to unite these parties.

If you go into any of the transactions of life, you will frequently see the necessity of the umpire and the arbiter. There may be the friendly suit; there may be the legal obscurity; there may be the feud and the animosity; and to the mediator shall be assigned all that is painful, all that is abstruse. And these parties are often bound together, abiding by the award, and knowing that that award is essentially and properly just. "A mediator is not a mediator of one." Your own recollections of social life assure you of this, and simplify to you this.

We might consider that which is more august; we might consider the congresses of kings, the negotiations of ambassadors; we might consider when an armistice is proclaimed, or when the mediatorship of states is proffered; but whether the more imperial, or the more common and obvious, the task of the mediator is plain. It is to stand between two; and he must fitly represent the state of both. Men are equal; but in civil condition there is a great disparity. There may be the poor, and there may be the rich; there may be the aristocrat, and there may be the hind. It is quite apparent that in the one case there could be no fitting representation of the other. How could the rich represent the poor—the poor represent the rich? How could the aristocrat represent the hind—the hind represent the aristocrat? Therefore the status of all must be placed into the account; and every one must be seen in his proper rank and bearing.

A mediator, therefore, has often a most difficult part to act. How can he fitly take up the cases of such different classes as may be supposed to be involved? And yet if he be equitable or dignified, even this must be demanded of him. A mediator must not only fitly represent the state of both, but he must impartially transact the interest of both; he must know no bias. He comes as one who must see nothing but the fact, the reality, the equity, the truth. He must put away from him all leaning, all prepossession, all prejudice, all favour, and stand and take upon himself the general burden—the interest of both; he must justly arbitrate the claims of both. Whatever one has a right to—whatever right the other has to demand—the right must be so placed before the arbiter, that he must only know it as the right,—blind as to whose it is, and therefore taking care of each.

But he must receive the power and deputation of both—for he is not idly to interfere; he cannot take upon himself such a function; it involves appointment, and that each party shall abide by his determination. And therefore we have thus to speak of the most ordinary transaction of mediatorship. There must be a fitting representation of the parties themselves; there must be an impartial transaction of the interests of both; and of course there must be their own agreement and consent.

As this is seen in all that is more general, and in all that which is mere detail—in the common walks of life, as well as in the high places of the earth—let us now think of Him, "the one Mediator,"—"the one," the only, "Mediator between God and man."

If we apply these principles, if we take these reasonings, if we adjudge these facts, then "the Mediator between God and man" must be complex in His person. He is to be in God's stead; He is to be our substitute and surety. He is to be Jehovah's fellow—associate—compeer; and He is not only to take the flesh and blood of our offspring, of our nature, but to be "made sin for us"—to "become a curse for us." Oh! what points to reconcile! what contrasts to combine!—"In the bosom of the Father;" and "set at nought," "despised and rejected of men"—so reduced in manhood, that He is "a worm, and no man, despised of the people!" God could only commit to God His own attributes, His own laws, and their vindication; man can only be represented by

Him who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and is in all points made like unto us."

Here, then, must be omnipotence and infinity; here must be the God and the man. The complex person is proclaimed. "God was manifest in the flesh;" "the Word was with God, the Word was God;" "the Word became flesh, and dwelt amongst us." Oh! how invaluable is that conception—"Emmanuel, God with us!" Brethren, glory ye in His holy name; make your boast of this "mystery of godliness." These are the essentials of the Mediator—and these alone.

But our Mediator must take upon Himself, not simple negotiation merely, but vicarious action and suffering; He must be our offering—our sin-offering, our peace-offering; He must establish atonement and expiation. For the quarrel is not that of words—the quarrel is of principles, the quarrel is of the attributes of Deity against the sins of mankind; and all those sins must be taken away, and there must be an atonement, an expiation; and if He will but stand His part, and redeem His gage as Mediator, it is He who must be "the Just for the unjust," it is He who must "bear our sins and carry our sorrows." It is not adjustment; it is that sin must be avenged on Him—that He must be the victim—that He must "die the death."

But, thirdly, it is quite as necessary that He shall establish a peace between the parties, honourable, dignified, and satisfactory to them both. It is not that He is to compound the Divine character, relax the Divine law, or bring down anything of the great and the glorious and the pure to our standard; it is not that He shall overlook any of our cares, any of our burdens, any of our griefs. When peace is made by Him, through the blood of the cross, every perfection of God is signalized, and man exults in that peace. The olive branch is elevated in his eye, and its balm is drunk by his spirit. It is a peace which God attests; it is a peace in which man rests. He finds in it rest unto his soul.

And then, fourthly, there must be consent and agreement. God has already signified this; He has put His bow in the cloud; there can be no doubt that He has assented. The gift of His Son is that assent. But now swells the giant difficulty of all: how to bring man into these terms—how so to bring him into these terms that he shall justify them, and admire them, and admit them. My brethren, we allow the difficulty—a difficulty greater than all; for God has "provided a Lamb for a sin-offering;" everything has been done on the part of God: but man remains in an entrenched malignity, in an "outer darkness," and will not acquiesce in any of these arrangements. God feels that they do not insult Him; but man affects that the insult is on himself.

III. This only renders more auspicious the further disclosure of the text—the exclusive agency of Deity in this arrangement.

It never can come to a satisfactory result, that these parties shall act independently—that God shall act, and that man shall act. If, therefore, it were left to man, the arrangement must be broken; the peace must be voided; the Mediator must withdraw. But God determines concerning this dilemma, that as a Mediator must be a mediator of two, He will not only act for Himself, but act for the opposite party, and will prove Himself here "one"—to be seen alone, to be glorified alone. It is His undivided doing, and He shall bear the glory. This will be made plain to you, when you remember—

I. First, that He originated the plan. From that hour in which man hid himself amidst the thickets and beneath the shadows of the garden which he had defiled—from that hour to this, when has man sought the Divine favour, in any way which God would point out? Man would propitiate, man would exact, man would claim; but when did man sue for pardon? when did man cast himself, as a humble suppliant, before the Divine footstool? The moroseness of the human heart is seen in its practical atheism; and God at the very last is only represented as saying to the reprobate—(and how is He arraigned for the saying!)—"depart," when every reprobate has often said to God before—"Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." "This cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and mighty in working." What genius gave this profile? What intellect struck this outline? God, when there was despair on earth, and silence in heaven, made this provision: "Deliver him from going down to the pit;" "I have laid help on One that is mighty." And as the Mediator comes forth, this seems

to be His soliloquy : " I wondered there was no intercessor ; and of the people there were none with Me." We have our proud helpers now—our self-righteous, going about to establish a righteousness of their own ; but pardon through the blood of Christ, salvation by His simple mediatorship—it is all of celestial origin, it is all Divine. " God is one," and only to be seen in the very origination of the scheme.

2. Secondly, God has provided that Mediator. You need not bring (so to speak) the Messiah with you, and ask God to deign acceptance of Him ; there could scarcely be so irreverent a course. " Him hath God the Father sealed ; " " Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood." The priest has not to officiate ; the altar has not to rise ; the victim has not to bleed ; the fire has not to kindle : " it is finished ; " and there is every token of God's approval ; there is the sovereign stamp upon Him whom He has designated to this work. " God is one ; " who gave His Son, who proposed the sacrifice of His Son. Who but the Father could have " delivered Him up for us all ? " The provision of the Mediator proves that " God is one " exclusively here.

3. Thirdly, there is a removal of every obstruction and embarrassment. For what obstruction and embarrassment would press upon us, had we to weigh the claims of God—had we to meet the perfections of God—had we to adjudicate His wrongs, or to assert His rights ! But God intimated to us His plan, showed to us His mercy, gave us knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins—arranged all—provided for His own character, provided for the order and the harmony of His own universe ; and now it is not for us to raise a doubt, or to instance an objection, but simply to take what He has facilitated to the last degree. So that there is a reservoir of contrivance for all, and there is a magazine of provision for all ; and there is not a case unheeded—there is not a want unmet ; and therefore, instead of imagining (as our unbelieving hearts are prone to suspect) that God is opposed—the commencement is with Him, the prosecution is with Him, the climax is with Him. There is no difficulty on His part ; He has displaced—and the displacement cost Him his only-begotten Son. The removal of every obstruction and embarrassment proves that here " God is one."

4. Fourthly, God secures the responsive volitions of man. He leads into captivity high thoughts—" the imaginations which exalt themselves." There is an invisible power, by which He can take hold of the spirit, search its recesses, try its reins, touch its springs ; and He has access to that spirit, and controul over that spirit ; and without any violence that spirit now sympathises and agrees. And mark that result, the process of which we cannot trace, although we know it is a rational, and a persuasive, and a moral process. " Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." How many a high thought has been brought low ! How many a proud heart has been subdued ! How many a spirit has been seen in sudden willingness ! And you know not how they were drawn. They were not (properly speaking) constrained ; on violence was wrought upon them. Here " wisdom is justified of all her children ; " here the spiritually poor are made rich ; and here the sorrowful of spirit are made glad. " God is one " here—only to be seen in such an arrangement.

5. Fifthly, God alone is to be marked and adored here ; for the development of the Godhead is (so to speak) an arrangement for the very working out of this mediatorial plan. Necessarily absolute in itself, there was not perhaps absolute necessity for this development. Unless there had been such a contrivance of salvation, the development itself might have been unintelligible ; but now we think of the subsistence of that essence—their relationship, their undertakings, their offices—that the Father and the Spirit sent the Son, that the Son came, that the Son was the gift of the Father, yet also that He gave Himself, and that the Spirit is the promise of the Father, the gift of the Father, yet shed upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ. My brethren, we now see this scheme of mediation, as it involves the one God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. All these are " one." We therefore think of the Father, the representative of justice and of moral government ; we think of the Son, the repairer of the breach ; we think of the Spirit, the efficient agency who takes and applies it all. God, Godhead alone is seen—is " all and in all."

6. And lastly, in the administration of the Gospel, it is made evident to us

that God is alone visible here, and to be adored here. He "is one"—He is alone. Let us think, my brethren, of the blessings that Christ is made to us: "Of God He is made to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." "Of God" Christ is made all this to us. It is God's design—it is God's grace—it is God's operation. Then let us consider such language as this, illustrative of the whole dispensation of grace: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." Was it not enough, we may familiarly inquire—was it not enough that He should reconcile Himself to the world, and wait for the acquiescence of the world? But "God is one;" and true to this simple delineation of His character, "God is in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto Himself." Already satisfied, already vindicated, He asks no more; His government requires no more; His law exacts no more. But there is man's rebellion and enmity to overcome; and He is "in Christ" for this very purpose—to bring down proud looks, and to conquer self-righteous hearts—to "reconcile the world unto Himself."

Brethren, these are wonders, and they are wonders in the deeps. They tell us what is God, and that "He who is our God is the God of salvation." We call in no human aid, no created interposition, but only—

"Him first, Him last, Him midst, and without end."

And how does this fortify and cheer the Christian soul! Oh! there are hours when the infinite purity and rectitude of Deity are truly overwhelming; there are moods, when we think of "Him who cannot look upon iniquity." Brethren, we need a refuge then, a covert then. Betake you to the shadow of this Mediator. Stand behind Him, and let Him represent you; stand behind Him, and let Him advance, as you follow to the awful throne. There you are protected; there you, through Him, "have access, with boldness, by the faith of Jesus Christ." "Touch but the hem of His garment"—virtue goeth forth from Him; and while the Saviour speaks, (or rather, He need not speak, for "the blood of sprinkling speaketh" through Him,) let you suppose that those accents are uplifted for you.

And let the sinner be warned. Oh! what would you do? You are not content to be saved. Language is often heard upon your lips—"Unworthy!"—showing all that self-ignorance which belongs to the enmity of the human heart. You would save yourselves! We know there is scriptural idiom for this. But what mean you by it? Are you "working out your own salvation with fear and trembling?" You are bringing your offerings—your mortifications, your deeds of the law; you speak of "making your peace with God!" How agonized is the pastor's heart, frequently, at the side of the couch of departing life, to hear the Pharisaic boasting—"I have made my peace with God," or—"I would make my peace with God!" Know you that law which you have first to satisfy? Know you that justice which you have first to appease? "Make your peace!" One only can do it—One "whose goings forth were from everlasting"—One who "travailed in the greatness of His strength"—"speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." Oh! "think no longer so exceeding proudly and arrogantly, nor lift up your horn on high." Take the peace which He has made; accept the peace which He now proffers.

And oh! my brethren, "my heart's desire and prayer" is, that the doctrines of this Mediator, and of this mediation, as they have long re-echoed within these walls, may long reverberate from them still. "If we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel than that which we have preached, let him be accursed." Here be the refuge of the contrite sinner; here be the sanctuary of the afflicted saint; here may they find the Mediator of God's elect, and God's people; and here let there be not only a proclamation of an objective, but alike of subjective grace—not only of a Mediator evidently set forth before your eyes, "crucified for you," but of that God who "is one," in the entire work of that Mediator and that mediation; so that while you bless God for the gift of a Mediator, you may equally recognize Him in every operation—converting, enlightening, sanctifying the soul, that you may see that the whole matter of the sinner's conversion, of the sinner's sanctification, is a matter which equally belongs to his salvation, with his acceptance and his pardon, that you may see that in all which God does without the sinner, and in all which God does within the sinner, He alone is to be acknowledged—and that this "God is one!"



## THE DAY OF CHRIST'S COMING.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. JAMES PARSONS.

PREACHED IN ISLINGTON CHAPEL,  
ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, JUNE 23, 1847.

On occasion of the Re-opening of the Chapel.

*"But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?"—Malachi iii. 2.*

It was a distressing announcement delivered by the Most High to His ancient people, in the midst of His closing expostulations with them, on account of their continued impenitence—"Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them; yet they hearkened not unto Me." The ministry of the prophets was continually exhibiting to the people, on whose behalf they were anointed, impending visitations, as the consequences of their sins, and at the same time encouraging them to the cultivation of the tempers and habits which might avert the Divine anger, and be instrumental in restoring the Divine favour. In the performance of this high commission there is a spirit of bold fidelity and of melting tenderness, which cannot be sufficiently admired; and both the end and the matter of their instructions remain for permanent benefit, even until the last generations of time.

The communications that were made by the prophet Malachi, are a signal example of the remark which has now been presented. He exercised his functions soon after the return of the remnant of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, and in him it was appointed that the line of the prophetic administrations should be consummated and should cease. Multitudes were around him, unaffected by the severe judgments which had already been endured; both the priests and the people were involved in flagrant guilt against their long-suffering benefactor; and he came forth with what he has expressed, in the commencement of this book, as "the burden of the Word of the Lord unto Israel," in order to reprove their practices, to enforce their duties, and to exhibit those great sanctions of the Divine law, in conformity with which He would impart blessings to the penitent, while He would consign the rebellious and the unholy to condign punishment and to final ruin.

Amidst these various exhibitions of truth, there comes a remarkable proclamation of the Messiah, whose office is not viewed, as it usually is, so much in association with His arrangements of mercy and grace, but with His designs of justice and retribution: for in answer to the cavils of those who had "wearied God with their words, saying, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delighteth in them;" or with asking the taunting question, "Where is the God of judgment?"—it is announced, "Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?" And then He is represented as employing a severe and an all-penetrating scrutiny, by which He will accomplish the purification of some, and the signal destruction of others.

We admit, brethren, of course, and fully, the application of this solemn passage to the personal advent of the Messiah, "in the fulness of time," and in the land of Judea, when He produced such an immediate effect, in detecting the character and in deciding the destinies of the Jewish nation; but at the same time we deem ourselves perfectly justified in carrying our contemplations onward, to an era which is yet to come—that of which we read so much in the Volume of inspiration, when the same Messiah shall in the last, and in the highest measure, exercise His judicial functions among all the nations of mankind.

This being the application in which we are now to employ the words before us, we request your serious attention, while we observe, in the first place, that there is a momentous period for man to anticipate; and secondly, that there is a momentous question for man to consider.

I. In the first place, observe, there is a momentous period for man to anticipate.

It is announced, in the passage before us, as one certain and specific event; and in illustrating it, we shall of course carry on your contemplations to an era which is to arrive, when the ages of time shall have run their course, and when the economies of Divine providence and grace shall have reached their close—that era which is indicated to us so often in the inspired Volume as "the day of the Lord," as "the great day," and as "the last day." And let us request your observation to the distinguishing characteristics of that day, and to the inevitable certainty of that day.

1. With regard to the distinguishing characteristics of that day—

(1.) It will be a day on which the Lord will visibly and personally appear in the presence of the universe. When He had completed the purposes of His first advent, He ascended into heaven, in order to exercise and to perform important functions there, giving the assurance, for our consolation, that He would manifest Himself again, in a manner which the whole intelligent creation should witness and admire. His own language was: "The sign of the Son of man shall be seen in heaven," and all the tribes of the earth shall see Him coming with power and with great glory;" "He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's glory, and in the glory of the holy angels." The language of the apostles was: "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God;" "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed with His mighty angels from heaven, in flaming fire;" "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him; and they also who pierced Him; and all the kindreds of the earth shall mourn because of Him."

What a mighty and wondrous contrast is expressed, in these terms, to the mode and the character of the advent which is past! Once He came as a victim; but then He will come as a conqueror. Once He came as a servant; but then He will come as a sovereign. Once He came in the feebleness and lowliness of humanity; but then He will come in the power and the grandeur of Divinity, concentrating upon Himself from numberless beings whatever can be rendered of lowly adoration and praise.

(2.) And then this will be a day on which the Lord, by His coming, will perform great and wondrous acts. At His appearing, and by His bidding, the fabric of material nature will undergo its grand and final change. "The sun will become black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon as blood;" "the stars will fall from their places," "like the leaves of the fig-tree, when they are shaken by an untimely wind;" "the heavens shall depart as a scroll that is rolled together;" "the elements will melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burned up." All these things shall thus be destroyed, and "new heavens and a new earth" will then emerge from the ruins. He will send forth His voice, and command the sounding of the trumpet, at which the dead of the human race shall arise from their graves, at which the living shall be changed, and at which all their bodies and spirits, being united, shall stand, with countless hosts of angels and of demons, gathered by the same summons, in one immense assembly, according to a sublime arrangement, before His throne. He will occupy the seat, and He will perform the functions of the Judge—judgment being the one grand purpose for which all besides is done. He will exercise close and omniscient

scrutiny upon each one and upon all of the vast congregation that is collected before Him, known only in the two grand classes of human character—the righteous and the wicked. On the righteous—those who have been united with the merits of His atoning blood—He will pronounce the commendation of His grace; and they shall be exalted with holy angels to the immortal and ecstatic felicities of heaven. On the wicked He will pronounce the malediction of His justice; and they will be consigned, with foul fiends, to “everlasting destruction from His presence, and from the glory of His power”—“the worm that dieth not, and the fire that can never be quenched”—“the everlasting fire” that is “prepared for the devil and his angels.” “These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.”

Such, my brethren, will be the thrilling and the momentous transactions of this last day—of the Lord’s appearing.

“Great day, for which all other days were made;  
Great day of dread decision and despair!”

2. We have thus presented to you the scriptural statements, with regard to the distinguishing characteristics of that day; and we now notice, briefly, the inevitable certainty of that day.

There is not, my brethren, with regard to the grand developments now presented to your attention, anything which admits of equivocation or of doubt. It may be, indeed, that we see no sign of the coming of the day of the Lord—that the sun rises and sets in its appointed order—that no portentous sound bursts upon the ear—that no dark omen is exhibited in the firmament—that no earthquake shakes and convulses the globe upon which we dwell—and that human affairs proceed in the same manner in which they have been conducted for successive centuries; it may be, that there are now (as was predicted by the apostle Peter,) “scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things have continued as they were from the creation of the world”—thus interpreting to the fatal purposes of scepticism and of infidelity that delay which is announced as a sign of the long-suffering of the Lord, “who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Yet, brethren, the time which is before us is, in its appointment, certain and true; and evidence is brought to us from all the sources from which evidence can be conveyed, rendering conclusive and imposing attestation to the tidings, that there really is this period of final and irreversible judgment to come.

Upon the certainty of the period which is now before us, we might direct your attention to many auxiliary evidences, which must be considered as of no inferior or slight importance. We might, for instance, remind you of the general opinion of the human race to that effect; for where is the religion, or where is the system, which has not to some extent recognised a future retribution, except where man has appeared in his most down-trodden and brutal barbarism? We might remind you also of the operations of the human conscience, in those decisions which it pronounces respecting passions and actions, inflicting pain or exciting pleasure, as those passions and those actions may be regarded as vicious or virtuous. And what can this be, but an internal testimony, rendered to us by God, of the truth? We might remind you, again, of the construction of all human governments, which are necessarily sustained by the sanctions of rewards or punishments; and how shall we permit to governments which are inferior or subordinate, that which may be refused to the government which is superior and supreme? We might also remind you of the unequal allotments of the righteous and the wicked in the present world: the wicked frequently are exalted—the righteous as frequently are depressed: and once admitting the principle of a moral government, we cannot but believe, that this points to, and necessarily presents to us, an equitable and a perfect administration to come. This is precisely the conclusion to which the wisest man states himself to have arrived: “I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.” But after all, my brethren, the chief weight of evidence is contained in the Volume that is open before me, of which it must be averred, that it possesses irrefragable proof, in all its various developments, that it is an announce-

ment from God—the God that made the universe—the God of truth—(so that it is impossible for Him to lie)—the God who declares “the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.” And, my brethren, whatever the spirit of human rebellion may announce or pretend against this record, it is a testimony in the presence of which infidelity must be frowned down into insignificance, and which must for ever stand firm and triumphant, in its unanswerable truth and grandeur.

Now, brethren, without entering into a prolonged argument upon the matter, let me entreat you to discharge from your minds, (if you have indulged in it,) any possibility of uncertainty or of evasion, with regard to the coming of this latter day. As true as the broad heavens are stretched above you—as true as the solid earth dwells and is fixed beneath you—as true as that the life-blood is now moving in your veins, and that you can move and act with the power of animated and intelligent beings—so true is it that you, and all your fellow-men, of every rank and age and nation, shall appear before “the great white throne,” and by the fiat of Him who shall sit upon it be consigned to the enduring happiness of one world, or to the equally enduring miseries of another. Away, then, with evasions and uncertainties! Let the matter be fixed, and settled, and determined; and at once, brethren, seek to comply with the exhortation of Him who is finally to appear: “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

II. We have gone, my brethren, somewhat rapidly over the part of the subject which has thus been illustrated, in order to occupy much of your attention upon the second: and having noticed the solemn period which men have to anticipate—that which is denominated “the last day,” when the Messiah will appear visibly and personally in the presence of the universe, and accomplish great and wondrous acts, and rendered settled and inevitable in the councils and by the appointment of the Omnipotent—let us now observe, that there is a momentous inquiry for men to consider. “Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?”

It may be observed, that the form of expression which is now before us was frequently employed by God, in regard to His chastening visitations, in the history of His ancient people. This form of interrogation (if we may employ the phrase,) was a favourite one, on the parts of the prophets, in the name of their Master, for the purpose of exciting and arousing their attention. “What will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?” “A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and My people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?” “If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” “The day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who shall abide it?” “God is jealous, and the Lord avengeth: who shall stand in His anger, and who shall abide in the presence of His indignation?” Is not the same mode of challenge and inquiry rightly to be transferred from providential dispensations to the final allotments of the great appointed day of the Lord? and is not the mode of challenge that which may especially be employed to the careless and the unconverted, that by it they may, in the exercise of God’s mercy, be prompted to “flee from the wrath to come?”

We shall now, therefore, my brethren, urge this inquiry upon all those who constitute this audience, not omitting the most mature and established Christian, though directing the energy of our efforts to those who are in transgression and in peril. “Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?” This inquiry shall be vindicated; it shall be applied; and it shall be advised upon.

1. This inquiry shall be vindicated.

There are multitudes among sinful and unconverted men, who vehemently object to and protest against any such inquiry being urged upon them at all. They have no objection to inquire, (or it may be, to be inquired of,) concerning

their circumstances and prospects, with reference to the present life ; but when it is recommended them to extend the sphere of thought, and to question as to those realities which are beyond the grave, even the realities of judgment and eternity—then, as if some dire and terrible spectacle had been conjured up by a dark and fearful magic, they start back, and bid them to “avaunt;” and they pour forth upon the persons who would advise them the gall of bitter reproach, as if they were sorcerers, who would torment and destroy them. No sinners who are yet under the power of sin, will ever listen with complacency to a challenge as to their prospect, in the day of retribution. Not unfrequently have the ministers of truth, who have brought it distinctly and affectionately before them, been challenged with insult and defiance in return. ‘What right have they in this manner to perplex and to annoy us? What are they, that they should use this freedom? Such pertinacity is perfectly unauthorised. When will they cease, and leave us alone?’ It may be that there are some in this congregation, who have in spirit thus dealt with their pastors and teachers; and it may be that there are some who feel disposed to deal thus with him who addresses them.

Now, my brethren, we mean to affirm, that our right to press and urge this inquiry is as valid as was the right of the prophets of old; not for a moment that we would assume anything approaching in character or in office with them—but there are certain institutes, by which we are guided and authorised, which in this respect place us undoubtedly on a parity. Will you listen, while we explain to you on what we conceive our right to be founded?

(1.) That right is founded on the nature of the commission which we have received, in the ministry of the Lord—a commission which tells us to declare “the whole counsel of God,” “to warn every man, and to teach every man, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus;” that we are to be “all things unto all men, if by any means we may save some;” and which moreover threatens, if we be undecided, or dastardly, or unfaithful, that the guilt of souls will finally be imputed to us before the Lord.

(2.) That right is founded, again, upon a just estimate of the value of your intelligent and immortal spirits—a value far transcending any possibility of competition or of counterbalance, in comparison with which treasures, and power, and empires, and continents are as nothing. As the Redeemer solemnly inquired—“What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

(3.) That right is founded upon an equally just conviction of the fact, that while in a state of impenitent and unbelieving sin, you are in danger. You are in danger of departing from earth, carrying with you no warrant to enter into a peaceful eternity; and you are in danger, when the last great day shall display its burning splendours, of appearing before the tribunal as those who have no plea, and who (as the legitimate consequence of transgression,) must be hurled down to that dark and fearful world, where you will be tormented day and night, for ever and for ever. My brethren, is it possible, upon any recognised principle of philanthropy, to do other than to warn you to “flee from the wrath to come?”

Thus we conceive that our right of presenting and urging the inquiry is amply asserted; and remember, that whatever earnestness and importunity we may from time to time endeavour to employ, (yet at the best, alas! how inadequate and how imperfect!)—we are only displaying to you a friendship which really is most disinterested, enlightened, substantial, and sincere. This, brethren, is the emotion we now feel towards you. “Oh! that you were wise, that you understood this, and that you would consider your latter end!”

2. The inquiry before us, then, is vindicated; and now, secondly, as we stated to you, it is to be applied.

We find many instances of remarkably close personal application in the writings of the prophets, and especially in the ministry of Christ and of His apostles. It will not be, therefore, unauthorised or improper, if the inquiry which is now before us be applied, respecting various ranks and classes, representatives of whom, perhaps, may be found, especially on certain occasions, within the precincts of the sanctuary of God. “Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?”

(1.) Shall the infidel—he who has “rejected the counsel of God against himself,” against argument, and entreaty, and appeal, and perhaps, assuming a bolder port and form of impiety, has denounced the Record of inspiration as

but an imposture and a lie—shall he abide and stand? No; for it is pronounced—"He that believeth not, is condemned already;" "He that believeth not, shall be damned."

(2.) Shall the sensualist—he who has degraded the high and immortal gift of reason to the vulgarities of animal appetite, herding with the drunken, with the gluttonous, or with the lewd, and thus "glorying in his shame"—shall he stand? No; for it is pronounced of all such—"They shall in nowise enter into the kingdom of God."

(3.) Shall the worldling—he who has concentrated his activities and desires on that which perishes in the using, prostrating his faculties and his powers in idolatrous service to mammon—shall he stand? No; for it has been pronounced—"Whosoever would be the friend of the world is the enemy of God."

(4.) Shall the Pharisee—he who "being ignorant of God's righteousness, has gone about to establish his own righteousness," and who, repudiating the grand evangelical principles of the Gospel, has believed that by the merit of his own penances and works he can establish a claim to acceptance before the heart-searching God—shall he stand? No; for it is pronounced, that "whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased," and that "the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place."

(5.) Shall the hypocrite—he who has assumed "the form of godliness," while he knew that he had not the power, and who, deluding his fellow-men with a falsehood, will pass into eternity with "a lie in his right hand," as though he could deceive and delude the omniscient One—shall he stand? No; for it is pronounced, that God abhors the sacrifice, when men "draw nigh unto Him with their lips, while their hearts are far from Him," and that into the new Jerusalem "there shall in nowise enter anything which defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie."

"Who may abide the day of His coming? or who shall stand when He appeareth?" Brethren, none but those who have repented towards God, and who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; none but those who have been justified by the blood of the atonement, and sanctified by the influence of the Spirit. As to all beside—and I tell it as a solemn and heart-searching truth to all those who constitute this audience to-night—that if they be found in any of the classes which have been enumerated, or in any other classes which embody especial forms of impenitent and unbelieving sin, they will, amid the burning grandeur and tremendous development of the two worlds, presented before and around the tribunal of the great and resistless Judge, themselves have to lament, and will themselves have to cry out, in the last accents of despair—"Rocks and mountains, fall upon us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the Lamb, for the day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

"When Thou, my righteous Judge, shalt come,  
To fetch Thy ransomed people home,  
Shall I among them stand?  
Shall such a worthless worm as I,  
Who sometimes am afraid to die,  
Be found at Thy right hand?"

Let each one this night, in the silence of midnight, and in the darkness of the solitary chamber, bring home the question, in concentrated and unabsorbing energy, to his own spirit—

"Great God! and where shall I appear?"

2. The inquiry, then, has been vindicated and applied; and now it is to be advised upon.

God has been pleased to institute the Christian ministry, for the purpose of rendering counsel and encouragement to all who would return unto Himself; and coming into this sanctuary, with new hopes and new anxieties, doubtless, on the part of your minister, it may, perhaps, be well and appropriate to manifest also this part of our public commission, by presenting to those for whose benefit the present service is especially designed, those counsels by which they may be enabled not to shrink from the inquiry, but to enter upon it, to hail it, and to answer it peacefully and well.

(1.) And, my brethren, men are advised; in connection with this question, to

embrace from the heart the appointed method of preparation for the day of the Lord's coming, in which alone there is a promise of safety. It is delightful to know, that there is a method for escape and rescue; that upon this grand scheme the councils of eternity were arranged; that from them it has proceeded; and that it has been meritoriously accomplished by the very Being who, at the last great day we have contemplated, is Himself to come forth in the awful character of the Judge. Look at that grand and wondrous Being, as you find Him, during the days and years of His first advent, in the territories of Palestine. There behold Him, in Bethlehem, a helpless babe, lying in the manger of a stable, because "there was no room for Him in the inn;" behold Him, a humble youth, living in obedience to those who were reputed His earthly parents, and working at lowly and industrial employments, as though He aspired to no public or important station; behold Him, coming forth to His public preaching, associating only with the lowly and the mean, wandering homeless and houseless in the mountains and deserts of Judea, and while "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, He not having where to lay His head;" behold Him, in the garden, apart from His disciples, convulsed with the contemplation of His coming woes, and there "sweating great drops of blood" running down to the ground, as He prayed that "if possible the cup might pass from Him;" behold Him, condemned as a blasphemer, buffeted, spit upon, crowned with thorns, clothed in purple, mocked, and scourged; and then behold Him, on the cross, in that last mysterious agony, exclaiming—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" In this was the process, by which was accomplished the grand provision for the salvation of sinners—and it was accomplished in His death; for then there fell upon Him, and there was quenched within Him, that fire which justice had lighted up to desolate the earth, when Adam fell, which ran along the earth, finding fresh fuel in every crime and iniquity of man, and which, had it not been for His mercy, would have wrapt the entire universe in flames. "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree;" and the sinner, convinced of sin, has only to look in faith to that cross, and the very moment the eye of faith rests there, and pleads there, from that moment the Judge is made his Friend. The first advent prepares for the second; he who is a partaker of the sufferings of the first, shall be a partaker of the glory and salvation of the second; and I say to the vilest sinner within these walls—the infidel, the sensualist, the worldling, the Pharisee, the hypocrite—In whatever form of aggravated transgression you may have indulged, I tell you, my friend and fellow-sinner, that by a simple contrition of heart, and by a simple application by faith of the merits of the crucified One, you shall obtain an inheritance with the glorified One. The curse is cancelled—the cloud is dispersed—the storm has ceased; blue and cloudless azure covers the vast expanse of the firmament, and the prospect is that of "fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore."

My brethren, many of us have been to the cross of Calvary already: let us go thither again, and let us pray to God that others may be found standing with us there to-night. Come, let us congregate; and let us gaze; and let us love; and let us rejoice; and let us sing the noble hymn, with which our sanctuaries sometimes resound—

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
'Midst flaming worlds, in these array'd,  
With joy shall I lift up my head.

Bold shall I stand in that great day:  
And who aught to my charge shall lay?  
Fully absolved by Thee I am,  
From sin and fear, and guilt and shame."

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the

love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Is not the advice right and good, to embrace the proper method of preparation for the day of the Lord's coming, in connection with which there is this assurance of safety?

(2.) Again; there is another matter of counsel. Men are advised to embrace this method of preparation, without procrastination and without delay. There are many arguments, my brethren, solemn, and almost funereal in their importance, against delay. I shall present them for your regard, trusting that some, at least, will listen, will apply, and will improve.

The importance of the matters at issue is an argument against delay. In the ordinary concerns of life, when you have the prospect of securing an inferior and a temporal good, you act upon the principle which you learned in early education, as implied in the common phrase, that "delays are dangerous;" and you commonly take the first opportunity of grasping at the end which you anticipate. Why, brethren, is not the same principle practically applied to the high and awful concerns of the future? How vast the issue that is at stake! It is the soul—that immortal principle which remains necessarily unaffected by a capacity for corporeal death, and which, by the will of God, is invested with the high attribute of immortality; it is the soul—whose destinies are those of pleasure or of woe, commensurate with the capacities and with the duration of its being; the soul in glory or in ruin—the soul in felicity or in anguish—the soul in heaven or in hell—the soul is the issue, in its weal or woe, for ever; *your* soul, and *your* soul, and *your* soul—the soul of each and all in this audience. "The redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever." And when the alternative is so mighty and so overwhelming, is it not an argument against delay?

Again, brethren; the hardening influence of sin is an argument against delay. There is no question but that continuance in sin is connected with a process of induration or hardening, and that man becomes settled and established by continued indulgence in transgression against his God. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." And we read of exhortations, "lest we should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Now, brethren, it is probable, and more than probable, that this process has been continued, in no common manner, in the experience of some who are now in the presence of God. Are you not, sinners, yourselves aware that it has been commenced, and that it has fearfully operated? There was a time when, under the ministrations of the sanctuary, or the counsels of pious friends in domestic or social life, you quailed and trembled as they warned you, and melted and wept as they entreated and beseeched you; but now the same truths, urged with the same earnestness, in public or in the domestic circle, have strangely lost their power. Their themes are the same—their verities are the same—their manifest earnestness is the same; why is it that you feel not, and that all the emotions you once had, have passed off like a shadow and a dream? Because you have been hardened by the influence of sin. My brethren, the process is continued now, and you cannot leave the sanctuary to-night precisely with the same susceptibilities of moral and spiritual impression for the future, if you repent not, as you did when you entered it; and I tremble to think, that I have this night been to you either "the savour of life unto life," or "the savour of death unto death"—that I have either been the instrument of God in promoting your salvation, or your own instrument in promoting your damnation. Oh! stay, sinner, stay, and turn to Him against whom you have so deeply revolted! The hardening influence of sin surely is another reason against delay.

Again, and finally; the uncertainties of human life constitute another argument against delay. "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." We have had of late many and portentous manifestations, in the course of Providence, of the uncertainty of human life. Who is there that has looked around him, upon but a small and contracted sphere, who has not seemed as though he were walking amidst corpses, and over the graves of the dead? And how often, day after day, has the knell been repeated, which has seemed vocal with the advice of wisdom—"Boast not thyself of to-morrow!"



Oh! brethren, let us resolve, that "whatsoever our hand findeth to do, we may do it with our might," as knowing that "there is neither wisdom, nor device, nor knowledge in the grave, whither we are going;" and remember, that to "do it with our might," we must do it *now*. The uncertainties of life all constitute a reason against delay.

My brethren, permit me now to commend these truths to your sincere and personal regard. It has been my desire to present myself to-night before you, as one anxious only for the salvation of your immortal souls; and conscience bides me not in making this public statement; and therefore, in the full confidence that you will believe the preacher is sincere in his warnings and with his counsels, let me ask that you will follow them—that so you may rightly treat and reply to the question—"Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?"

Now grateful, Christian brethren, ought we to be, who trust that the work is done, and that we have now only to wait for the summons that shall translate us into eternity—with the assurance, that being "absent from the body," we shall be "present with the Lord," and that we shall be among those, who having "asleep in Jesus, God will bring with Him," when He shall come—finding our bodies raised from the dust and putrefaction of the grave, towards which we are rapidly tending, clothed then in incorruption, in power, in glory, and in immortality, and fitted to be the temples and the mansions of our refined and ethereal spirits, in the regions of bliss, throughout eternity! "Oh! give thanks unto the Lord, for His mercy endureth for ever."

And my fellow sinners, for whose advantage especially this service has been designed, refuse not some moments of earnest and prayerful contemplation. Remember the arguments against delay, and remember what is the penalty, if you choose to resist and to despise. It is possible that there is some person within these walls to-night, who will after all lose his soul. He will appear speedily before the tribunal; he will be condemned, and will depart to the regions of anguish. Who is it in this place, that will lose his soul? "Lord, is it I?" If ever that inquiry could be urged with more than ordinary solemnity, *now*. My hearers, you need not lose your souls! There is a way of redemption; you are freely invited to make use of it, with the assurance that you will be received, and you will be saved.

Some time ago, a young person, residing in the city where I have long laboured in the work of the ministry, was summoned to her home, for the purpose of listening to the last exhortations of a pious father. When she arrived at his habitation, he was exhausted and well-nigh gone, and he could only whisper gently to her the words, with his expiring breath—"Do not lose your soul." She had been gay and thoughtless, but the words arrested her; she appeared upon the sanctuary of God, and remained for a period apparently under the power of religious impression; but gradually that impression waned. It appeared but as the morning-cloud and the early dew; it passed away, leaving her in carelessness again. Circumstances, under Divine providence, led her, one Sabbath evening, to the sanctuary of which I am the pastor, when she heard a sermon on the value of the soul, which she passed by, from the commencement till well-nigh the close, with inattention; but by the singular overruling of Divine grace, the last words in the discourse were these—"Do not lose your soul." It seemed to her as though the voice of her departed father had uttered them; but it was more—it was the voice of God. She repented; she was converted; she professed Christ as a member of the Christian community over which it is my happiness to preside, and some time since I was summoned to her death-bed when amidst much anguish and pain of body she gave testimony to the power of Divine grace upon her heart, and departed with the blessed confidence that she had not lost her soul.

Oh! what would we not give for the assurance now, that there are some here to-night, who under the grace of the Divine Spirit, shall be prevented from losing their souls!

My hearers, one word, and I have done. If you lose your souls, you will have wandered thus.

May God prevent you from being the self-murderers of your souls!

## THE PROMISED LAND.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. HENRY CHRISTMAS, M.A., F.R.S., F.S.A.

PREACHED IN VERULAM EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, LAMBETH,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 5, 1847.

*"Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan."*—Numbers xiii. 2.

AFTER the miseries which the people of Israel had endured in the land of Egypt—the tyranny of the king, the contempt of the people, the severity of the taskmasters—they must have felt in a very lively manner the blessings of a rational freedom. No longer subjected to the controul of a harsh and alien sovereign, God himself was their Ruler, through Moses His minister; the Divine law was the code of their government; they were subjected to no constraint save that which was for their benefit, bound to no observances save those which the Divine wisdom had appointed. Under circumstances so propitious, though they journeyed through the wilderness, they perceived but little of its horrors: the dry sand was more pleasing to their emancipated feet than the velvet plains of Egypt; and the open and barren prospect offered more delights than the rich groves and well watered meadows of the land they had left. The cloud by day and the fire by night were the symbols of God's protecting presence; and while the refreshing shade of the one tempered the heat of the sun, and the cheering glory of the other lighted up the darkness of a tropical night, we may be sure that they were not less refreshing, not less cheering, to the minds of those who beheld them. It must have relieved the feverish agitation attendant upon enterprise, to know that their way was no uncertain expedition, for that God was their leader. It must have prevented the cold damp of despair, to reflect that He who had so lately executed vengeance upon their enemies, and for them had clothed a vast nation with mourning, was still leading them like a flock of sheep. Little though they were among the nations, and degraded as had been their condition, they were now honoured above all people, and distinguished by the great Jehovah as His own chosen race. After the destruction of Pharaoh and his host, Amalek also suffered for opposing them, and the rest of their way to the borders of Canaan was undisturbed by hostile interference. The ceremonies of the Mosaic law were appointed; many cheering promises of Divine and angelic assistance were given; and now, with their constitution completed, and the course of their victories marked out for them, they had but to enter in and experience the truth of the promise—"For My angel shall go in before you, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I will cut them off."

Before, however, they entered upon the conquest of these devoted nations, it appears that a proposition was made by the people to Moses, that certain men should go and examine the land, report upon its productions, and investigate the military strength of its inhabitants. Moses himself mentions this proposition in the book of Deuteronomy (chap. i. 19—24) as coming from the people. He laid it before the Lord, and the result was—"And the Lord said unto Moses, saying, Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan." It was indeed a beautiful land to which they had now come; the desolation

of the wilderness was past, and every heart bounded with joy at the delightful aspect of their promised home. The echoes of those dry rocks which had miraculously supplied them with water, the sultry and cloudless sky which had miraculously rained down manna upon them, were now to give place to the quiet murmur of a thousand brooks, the deep voice of mighty rivers, and a sky varied with clouds, holding forth the promise of "the early and the latter rain." We may suppose, that as they reflected upon the mercies they had enjoyed, they were filled with a holy determination to fulfil the commands of God, and the hearts of the oldest warriors among them overflowed with a stern joy at the thought of girding on their armour for the cause of the Lord God of Israel, of sweeping from the earth a nation of idolaters, and planting the banners of Jehovah upon the walls of their heathen cities. The animated mind of youth looked beyond this to a long period of ease and tranquillity, to wealth, to national prosperity and domestic happiness; and when the twelve men, one from each tribe, set out on their expedition to search out the land, the hearts of the whole nation went with them, and waited eagerly for their return, that they might buckle on their swords for conquest, and in the name of the Lord go forward to prevail. But the children of Israel were a people governed by impulse. So long as any powerfully exciting cause was in active operation before their eyes, they were zealously affected; but when the excitement was withdrawn, their zeal immediately declined. Thus we find them making a golden calf at Mount Sinai, and committing idolatry even in the presence of the cloudy pillar.

But the men who had been sent to spy out the land, at the end of forty days returned, and by their report confirmed all that the imagination of the Jews had pictured concerning its beauty and fertility. They brought with them a specimen of its delicious fruits, and the truth was wrung from the reluctant witnesses—"Surely it floweth with milk and honey, and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great; and moreover we saw the children of Anak there." And what then? What though the cities were fortified, and the men gigantic—did they suppose that God knew it not?—that He had promised to His people more than He could perform, and that having brought them safely out of the far more mighty land of Egypt, He would allow them to be consumed by a land "that eateth up its inhabitants?" Did they imagine that the Anakim and the Amalekites were more mighty than the God of the whole earth? No; the truth was, they forgot God; He was "not in all their thoughts." They beheld the pomp and power of the Canaanites—their splendid cities walled up to heaven, the stores of water and provision with which their highly favoured land was filled; they beheld the great stature of the Anakim, and the warlike preparations of the Jebusites, and they trembled at an encounter with a people so strong; but like the servant of the prophet, they saw only the might of one side—their faith was not strong enough to behold the ranks of cherubim and seraphim, standing with their flaming swords drawn in their hands round the throne of the great Eternal, and waiting to fulfil His behests. The Jewish spies could not hear the commission already given to the angel of the covenant, to cast out those nations before Israel; and looking only with the eye of flesh, they returned and declared in exact contradiction to the words of the Most High—"We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." In vain did Caleb and Joshua, remembering the promise, still the people before Moses; in vain did they exclaim—"Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it." The evil report prevailed; the fear of the giants was stronger than the desire of the milk, and the honey, and the grapes of Eshcol, "and all the congregation lifted up their voice and cried, and the people wept all that night."

The result was, that they decided upon electing a captain to lead them back into Egypt, casting off thereby their allegiance, not only to Moses, but also to God; and the Lord visited them in fierce indignation, swore in His wrath that they should not enter into the promised land, condemned them to a perpetual wandering in the wilderness, and slew by the pestilence the men that had brought up an evil report of the land.

No sooner had the anger of God been thus manifested, than the weak and yet obstinate Jews fell into the opposite error, instead of humbly acquiescing in the judgment inflicted on them; "they rose up early in the morning, and gat them to the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up into the place which the Lord hath promised, for we have sinned. And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord? but it shall not prosper. Go not up, for the Lord is not among you, that ye be not smitten before the Amalekites." They, however, went up, and were shamefully defeated. Then, and not till then, did they recognise the Divine power, and refrain from fighting against God. With scarcely any mental firmness, and almost as little religion, they could bear no reverses, and were ever being led into error. They were, as an eminent divine observes, headstrong, presumptuous, pusillanimous, indecisive, and fickle, and precisely therefore the more fitted for the work in which they were to be the instruments. Had they been a people wise in counsel, and determined in action, undaunted by danger, and undeterred by labour, there would have been natural causes to which their establishment might have been attributed; the weaker would have given way to the stronger, the less wise to the more wise; the miracles of God would have seemed works of supererogation, and their settlement in the land of promise would have been assigned to human foresight and human valour. As it was, when so base and degraded a people were chosen, not for their merit, but solely out of God's predeterminate counsel—His respect to His promise to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob—when nations, "seven nations, greater and mightier than they," were driven out before them, and when this had been done by plagues from the Lord—by the lions, and the hornets, and the pestilence, and the holding up of the hands of Moses,—when, after forty years' wanderings in the wilderness, they were brought back, not only to the border of Canaan, but into the high places thereof, and that "land of oil, and olives, and honey, of corn and milk and new wine," became their own; then surely the heathen were constrained to acknowledge that the excellency of the power was of God, and not of them.

Let us now return to the search into the promised inheritance. Not all those who went up in this unhappy expedition gave way to the spirit of fear and unbelief. Joshua, the type of a coming spiritual Saviour, and Caleb, the friend and companion of Moses, were among the men so commissioned; they too saw the beauty of the country, and admired its luxuriant fruits; they beheld the ripening harvest and the purple cluster of the first ripe grape; but they saw in this only the gracious goodness of the Lord to His chosen people: they also beheld the lofty towers and well defended battlements, the proud palaces, and still prouder temples, the magnificent cities, and the hosts of armed warriors; but in all these they contemplated the splendour of a doomed nation, and so far from feeling any emotion of terror, they were only struck with sorrow at the persevering wickedness of Canaan.

From this picture, may we not draw something like an analogy to our present state? There are few transactions recorded in the history of Israel, that have not their parallel in the spiritual state of man; and though much folly has been the result of indiscriminately spiritualising the historic parts of God's Word, still we may without blame point out the unity of the Divine counsel, as displayed in the dealings of Jehovah with the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, and the economy of salvation offered to the seed of Abraham according to the Spirit. We do know, that as Joshua shadowed forth in his victorious career "the seed of the woman," who should trample on the head of the serpent, so the actions of Joshua typified those advances in the knowledge and fear of God, which every Christian is encouraged, nay, commanded to make. We do know, that as the seven nations were, or might have been exterminated, root and branch, to make way for the twelve tribes, so may the sins which beset us be overcome by the Captain of our salvation. We have a Canaan, a heavenly Canaan, towards which we are journeying; and we are told by an oracle, even more sure than the Urim and Thummim—"There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God." This, then, being the case, can we do better than apply to ourselves the injunction in the text, and "search out the land" which is our promised abode? True it is, we cannot send men as the

Jews did: for "who shall ascend into heaven, save the Son of God which came down from heaven?" But there *was* one who was "caught up into the third heaven," and there heard and saw things which cannot be uttered; there *was* one, who was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day," and talked with Him who stood in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; and they, though they could not unveil to mortal eye the glory of the celestial world, though they could not realise to mortal ear the songs of the redeemed, yet gave us so far a glance into the state of the blessed, that we are enabled to "go on our way rejoicing," knowing that the city which we seek, "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," is no fancy of the imagination.

But shall we open the book of their record, and note what their inspired lips have spoken concerning the New Jerusalem? Shall we tell you of the gates, each made of a single pearl, and the foundations of twelve manner of precious stones? Shall we lead you to the "sea of glass, clear as crystal," over whose waves beams the ineffable brightness of the throne? There is the "rainbow like unto an emerald," and "the tree of life," and the golden streets, and the sound of ceaseless melodies, along the banks of the river proceeding from beneath the throne, "the river of the water of life." Shall we point out to you the crowns, and the harps, and the everlasting light? No—for we are persuaded that these, all heavenly as they are, form but a small part of the glory and the bliss of the risen. When the gates of that city shall close upon the ransomed spirit, will it be on these things that the undying eye will be fixed, or rather upon the face of "Him who sitteth upon the throne," the triune Jehovah, the glorified Jesus? He who "hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," and upon whom hath been laid the punishment of our offences—He who hath "washed us in His own blood, and made us kings and priests to God and to the Lamb," who hath gone before us, as "the first fruits of many brethren"—He will be the supreme object of our admiration and of our only worship. "And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever." Such is the land towards which we are hastening—an inheritance not doubtful, but secured to us by two "immutable things, by which it is impossible for God to lie."

And now, having heard this good report, shall we gird on our swords and prepare, as disciples of the Lord, as followers of the apostles, to "fight the good fight of faith," and declare in the heart-stirring words of Caleb—"Let us go up and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it." Press forward, then; the voice of our Captain is cheering us onward—"Fear not, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Angels are rejoicing at our progress; and not only so, but fighting on our side: Satan and his apostate legions are fleeing before the triumphant cross: while the voices of the saints are borne down to us on the wings of many ages, and calling to us with a sound like the noise of deep waters—"Be ye followers of us, as we followed Christ." Shall an appeal like this be unanswered? Shall we plead our terrors at the Anakim, while the sword of the Eternal is drawn on our behalf? Away with the thought; "though they hedge us in on every side, in the name of the Lord we will destroy them."

Yet let us not go on this warfare "without counting the cost;" the enemies against whom we have to contend, are giants indeed. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." These our foes are watchful as well as powerful; they are sleepless and most malignant; they know our weak parts, and can tempt us most craftily; they are in league with the corruption of our own nature, and are often most dangerous when least suspected. Are we prepared, against such antagonists as these, not only to draw the sword, but to cast away the scabbard? Have we a strong will, an unflinching courage, a contempt of the world, and a high and holy resolution to "count all things but dross, so that we may win Christ?" If we have, we may dismiss our fears, for we are not left alone in so unequal a conflict. "I am with you always, even to the end," is the inspiring assurance of the Lord.

But are there none among us, who are listening rather to the accounts of

the unfaithful spies, than to the just and faithful Caleb? Hark to their words. 'Truly it is a good land; human language would sink beneath the task of describing its glories, nor could the imagination of man conceive the idea of them. "The general company and church of the firstborn" are there, rejoicing with their risen Lord; "and this is the fruit of it," even "peace, love, and joy in the Holy Ghost." But *nevertheless* there are strongholds in the way thereto, where "the god of this world" armed "keepeth his goods in peace;" and the Anakim—the corrupt inclinations of our unregenerate nature—are marshalled in dark array, to oppose our march; and we are not able to go up against them, for they be stronger than we.' Is this the language to which you have been listening? Have you looked on the strait gate, and found it too strait—tried the narrow way, and found it too narrow? But no, we will tell you whence come the persuasive accents that you find so seducing. "O foolish Galatians! who hath bewitched you?" It is the will of the old serpent, who would fain bring you into bondage, or keep you so—who would fain have you choose him for your captain, and go down with him into the land of Egypt. The world is for a season his kingdom; and he has filled it with phantoms of terror, to deter you from marching towards Zion. He has furnished it with palaces like those of Circe, with syren music, with all that is gay and gorgeous and voluptuous; but if you enrol yourselves among his followers, the glittering pageant will but too soon vanish, and you will find yourselves marching over the sands of the desert, towards a lake of unquenchable fire.

Oh! my brethren, if you are not pursuing your journey towards the New Jerusalem, "with your faces thitherward," have you thought of searching out the land to which you are bound? Shall we undraw for you the dread curtain that shades the state of the departed, and tell you somewhat of the regions of unavailing sorrow? Will you place yourselves in spirit by the massy portals of the gloomy city; and while the smoke, ascending from the bottomless pit, floats above you, listen to the "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth," to the sighs and deep lamentations that resound through the starless air? Is there not a fearful distinctness, a terrible reality, in the shrieks of lost spirits, and the bitter mockery of fiends, borne upwards through the thick darkness, while the stern justice of an avenging Deity presses heavily upon them for ever? This is the land to which your choice is leading you; and are you prepared to say—"Let us go down and possess it?" Far from this, your constant cry is, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Awake, then, from your lethargy. "Arise from the dead"—the spiritual death of sin; "put on the whole armour of God," and you shall find that the armies of the aliens shall be put to flight. The fenced cities, though walled up to heaven, shall be dismantled, and "an abundant entrance shall be ministered unto you" into the rest of your Lord. There *was* some attraction in Egypt to the degraded Israelites, that made them look back with pleasure to their sojourn there, and when they thought of the flesh pots, and the onions, and the leeks, and the garlic, and the cucumbers; they forgot the murder of their sons, the tale of the bricks, and all the hard measures of that "king who knew not Joseph." They were willing to brave all the dangers of the desert, and the fury of the bereaved Egyptians; to retrace all their steps, in order that they might once more be able to eat of those things freely. But what shall be said in excuse for us? We boast of our intellectual pre-eminence; we talk much of our light, of our scriptural knowledge, and yet we are so fascinated with the delights of this world, so enslaved by "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," that we will not enter upon a course of certain conquest, under the Captain of our salvation, even "Jesus Christ the righteous." The truth is, we desire to be redeemed, but we do not desire to be renewed: we know that "without holiness none shall see the Lord," and instead of striving after holiness, we waste our days in wishing it were not needful, and trying to do a little longer without it. We have made friends in the camp of the Canaanites, and we are unwilling to break with them. We are not willing to bring the grace of God in opposition to our sins; we would fain continue to indulge ourselves, and yet be at peace with Him. This is a state in which no good can be done. Even as God commanded His

people utterly to destroy the nations, so has He commanded us to destroy utterly our sins, to make no compromise with them, to cry out for aid against them, and to resist even unto death.

And lest we should be cast down, and say, "Who is sufficient for these things?"—He will aid us as He did Joshua, will work still mightier miracles on our behalf than He did for him, will sweep away the opposition of "the world, the flesh, and the devil," and finally plant our feet on the celestial battlements, fulfilling the Scripture, "And the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by storm." The battle between the church and the powers of hell is yet raging; the banner of the cross is yet bearing down the opposing hosts; and let us look well to it on which side we are fighting. A little farther on are the radiant legions of those who have overcome the world, "the goodly fellowship of the prophets," "the glorious company of the apostles," "the noble army of martyrs:" their toils are over, their crowns are won: they have passed away from the church in combat to the church at rest, and the trumpet voice of their rejoicing reaches us in spirit, while we read of their fervid zeal, and contemplate the remaining and long-enduring effect of their faith and patience. Look onward, then; their ranks are every hour receiving new accessions. New companies are pressing forward; and glancing across the dark water of death, we see the line unbroken; the gates of the city open to receive the unceasing stream, and our ears catch the sound of their hallelujahs, like the murmur of the distant sea. Let us take our place in the bright procession, with our loins girded up and our arms ready; let us pass through this world, looking on the things thereof as dust and ashes,—watching that no one take our crown, and having our eyes fixed upon Jesus "the Author and Finisher of our faith." But a little while, and we shall have passed away from sorrow and mutability, and shall have entered into that "rest that remaineth for the people of God!"

# THE RECEPTION OF CHRIST BY HIS DISCIPLES INTO THE SHIP.

## A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. ROBERT BICKERSTETH, B.A.

PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, CLIFTON, BRISTOL,  
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*"Then they willingly received Him into the ship; and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went."*—John vi. 21.

THE miracle, of which these words give the account, is related by three out of the four evangelists. In each narrative the main features are the same, although in each there will be found minor details which the others omit. It is, for example, only in St. Matthew's Gospel that we read of what befel Peter when he asked permission of his Master to step forth on the troubled sea. St. Mark alone tells of the apostles' affright when the wonder was wrought; and he accounts for their alarm by affirming, "They considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was yet hardened." St. John explains the ground of Christ having constrained the disciples to embark, by referring to the design of the populace forcibly to make Him a king. In discoursing upon the miracle, we shall aim at embracing whatever is worthy of special observation, in whichever of the Gospels it is met with. The only exception to this will be in what concerns Peter. His conduct has, strictly speaking, nothing to do with the miracle; and it were sufficient by itself to form the material for a single discourse.

Now the whole three evangelists agree in placing this miracle next in order of succession to that of feeding the five thousand. In compassion for the multitude who at this period thronged upon our Lord's ministry, He determined upon the supply of their wants by a miracle. By that creative power which pertained to Him as God, He caused the scanty portion of but five barley loaves and two small fishes to increase so prodigiously, that about five thousand were fed, and there remained a surplus of twelve baskets filled with the fragments. This miracle, so forcibly evidencing a present Divinity, wrought for the time a deep impression on the people. In the fervour of their zeal and admiration, they desired forthwith to make Christ a king. It was very far, however, from our Lord's design to claim for Himself any earthly sovereignty. It was emphatically a spiritual, and not a terrestrial empire, which He came to establish. Hence, perceiving the intention of the populace, Christ at once adopted measures for its defeat. He dismissed the disciples, while He himself retired apart to pray. From what is stated by St. Matthew, namely, that Christ constrained His disciples to depart, it would seem they were loth to leave Him at this juncture. It may be, they would have rather hailed the success of the design which the people entertained, as being in accordance with their fondly cherished dreams of temporal advancement. However this be, for some cause or other it was necessary to urge vehemently the disciples to depart. And now, when it was even, we are informed that Christ was praying alone on the mountain, whilst the apostles in the ship were striving to cross the lake, opposed by an adverse wind and a boisterous sea. The eye of the Saviour, although He was personally withdrawn from them, was nevertheless open to the danger which threatened and to the fears which perplexed the heart of His followers. He did not, however, at once interpose, but chose rather to wait for a fitting moment, at which the putting forth of



His power in their behalf might be most conspicuous and most welcome. The fourth watch of the night had commenced, and daybreak was therefore not far distant, when our Lord descended from the mountain for the succour of the terrified apostles. He could, indeed, from that lofty height have commanded the winds and the waters to be calm, but He resolved rather to present Himself to the disciples, in order that they might the more certainly connect the cessation of the storm with the manifestation of Himself. He walked, as we are informed, on the agitated sea, its heaving billows serving Him for a firm pavement. He approached near to the vessel, although He at first made as if He would have passed by. The disciples beheld dimly the figure of a man, but they recognised not in the first instance their Master. The strange spectacle of a human form treading the rough waters, and upborne by them as upon dry land, inspired them with new dread. Wearied with the arduousness of their protracted toil in rowing, and having their imaginations already excited with apprehension of danger, they fancied the appearance to be that of a spectre, the spirit of the storm, sent to work them only disaster. In the agony of alarm they exclaim one to the other, "It is a spirit!" This was the moment at which the Saviour chose to address them; they catch the well known melody of His voice, as in cheering accents He utters the words, "It is I; be not afraid." We can all enter into the glad feelings which must at once have possessed them. No pilot that ever entered a vessel to navigate her through peril, was welcomed with such joy; and no sooner did they perceive it was Christ who addressed them, than "they willingly received Him into the ship." Then followed what we may term the consummation of the miracle—the winds are hushed, the waters subside into calm. The elements confess the presence of Divinity; they cease to rage against the vessel into which Christ had entered; "and immediately," as it is affirmed in the text, "the ship was at the land whither they went."

There can be no doubt, the miracle before us, like the majority of those which Christ wrought, was intended for an ulterior purpose beside merely attesting His divine power. Surpassing indeed was the demonstration which Christ afforded upon this occasion, that He wielded a dominion to which all things created are subject. If there be any one scene in which human might is felt to be more feeble than in another, it is amid the strife of the elements, when the waves of the ocean are lashed into fury by the power of the hurricane. At all times there is a tendency about the sea to create in the mind a deep impression of the vastness and the greatness of God. It is hardly possible to contemplate the sea—to watch the ceaseless play of its waters as they rise and fall—to hearken to its murmurs—and not to have one's thoughts elevated in the contemplation of that God who made the sea and the dry land, who appointed to the deep its boundaries, over which it may not pass. There is a majesty in the ocean, which seems to proclaim the majesty of God; and if it freshen into storm, if its surface be ruffled by the breeze, how tremendous doth seem its strength, how ungovernable by man its fury! What, then, if you beheld One, whose voice the winds in their wild rushing, and the waves in their tumult, should instantly obey? would you not confess that to such an One there must belong a power which none but God can wield or impart? Indeed, when you reflect how unapproachable are the winds to all human effort for their control—how man may be made their sport, but "cannot tell whence they come or whither they go;"—when you observe man's impotence before the waves of ocean—how resistless they are in their might, I can hardly conceive of any demonstration more convincing to the truth of His Divine power, than that which the Saviour gave when He curbed by His command the riot of the winds and the madness of ocean. Other miracles of the Saviour may have required as much the exercise of a power to which all created might is infinitely inferior, but there must have been something so startling in the spectacle of One who was outwardly a mere man, speaking to the storm and being instantly obeyed, that we can hardly conceive how the spectacle could be witnessed, and the impression not caused, that Divinity was in the voice which commanded the winds and the sea, and they owned at once its authority.

Passing, however, from this view of the miracle, it is probable, as we have

already hinted, that our Lord had some further design in the miracle than simply to manifest superhuman power. There were two occasions in the course of our Lord's ministry, upon which He manifested His dominion over the sea; but in each instance few, if any, beside His disciples, were spectators of the marvel. It would not seem, therefore, that the purpose of the miracle was for the manifestation of His Divine power, so much as for the symbolical setting forth of spiritual truth. If the design of the wonder had been prominently to exhibit His uncreated might, it is probable that many more beside the apostles would have been made spectators. Hence, in the examination of the miracle before us, we seem bound to search mainly for the typical lessons which it may have been intended to afford. Beyond question, the marvel is to be regarded as one of the strongest illustrations which Christ ever put forth of the power which belonged to Him as God; at the same time, we are to look upon the miracle as a vehicle in which there is a spiritual lesson conveyed; and we will proceed, therefore, in what follows, by God's help, to search for the truths which are symbolically taught by the occurrence under review, when Christ having appeared to the disciples as they sought apparently in vain to navigate the rough sea, "they willingly received Him into the ship, and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went."

Now you are aware, that when the curse was originally pronounced, in consequence of human apostacy, there was no part of creation excluded from its direful effect. It fastened upon man, and it injured him both corporeally and spiritually. It doomed him to an heritage of physical suffering and decay: while it sentenced the soul to reap in banishment from God's presence the penalty of having marred the Divine image. There can be no question but that in each of those diversified forms of disease whereby the human strength is enfeebled, the energies impaired, and life itself destroyed, no less than in all those moral disorders which characterise man's fallen estate, there may be recognised the baneful results of that primeval malediction, which is even still working out its disastrous injury to the tribes of humanity. The curse, however, did not take effect on the human portion alone of creation. It fell upon the whole visible workmanship of God—the lower tribes of animated being: earth, sea, and air—what is animate and what is inanimate; all of these have been smitten with a moral blight, have been brought under the influence of a curse which human transgression provoked. We know that creation was originally given to man to enjoy. He was placed upon earth as a great master spirit, to whom all things terrestrial were to be in subjection. The elements of nature were for him to use according to his own will; the ground was to yield almost unasked its bountiful produce; all living things—whether such as roam the air, or walk the earth, or inhabit the deep, were to acknowledge man as their lord. They were created in subjection to him as their constituted head. It would seem, however, that when man leagued in rebellion with Satan, he lost this inheritance; and, in a certain sense, surrendered up his lofty authority into the hand of the tempter by whom he fell. The devil having conquered man, usurped the dominion which had been entrusted to his keeping. Adam had been appointed the vicegerent of his Maker upon earth; to him there was delegated a vast and a glorious empire; but when he showed himself willing to mutiny against his Maker, he proved himself unworthy of the sacred deposit; he did in effect yield over his dominion into the hand of the adversary. And this may be the mode in which the curse is allowed to operate. The world may have been in a certain sense acquired by Satan, so that the dominion which could have been exercised by man, had he remained innocent, has in effect been since wielded by Satan. There are certainly very strong expressions employed in Scripture, which appear to corroborate this idea. You will remember, that Satan is styled "The god of this world," "The prince of the power of the air;" and other terms are made use of, which indicate a surprising and most awful dominion, as exercised at present by Satan upon earth. The result of the Redeemer's undertaking is spoken of as a giving back the sovereignty of our globe to the Lord Christ. One of the sublimest anticipations we have in connection with the consummation of all things, is declared in the anthem which shall then be chanted by the redeemed: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our

Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and for ever." What does this indicate, if not that but for the gracious mediation of Christ, the supremacy upon earth had been gained by the devil? So that, subject indeed to the Divine controul, Satan is now permitted, and hath been since the fall, to exercise over earth and its population a fearful dominion. Thus while beyond question the stormy passions of man's nature are put into play by his instigation, it is possible also that he is operating throughout every province of nature for the injury of man. He may have been concerned in causing the ferociousness of wild beasts, which in the time of his innocence were subject to man, and shall again lose their ferocity when the glad era of millennial blessedness is introduced—for is it not prophesied of that period, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fating together, and a little child shall lead them?" To the malice of Satan may be owing the hurricane, when it sweeps ruthlessly over the plain, or the fury of the ocean when, wrought up tempestuously, it makes sport of navies, and feasts on human life. This, again, is not mere conjecture. We know that Satan can stir the elements, and cause the whirlwind. He did so in the case of Job: one of his first efforts of malice against the patriarch was to cause a great wind to blow from the wilderness, which smote upon the house in which his children were gathered together, so that in its fall they were crushed. Thus it may be that there is no department of nature which hath not become, in some degree, subject to Satanic influence; and that whatever the engine whereby man may be injured, it might be shown to be under the power and direction of this fiend of all mischief.

But however this be, we all know that Christ Jesus hath appeared to reclaim in behalf of a ruined humanity whatever was lost by transgression. Every trophy that Satan ever gained, and every spoil of conquest, is to be recovered; and as the curse settled upon every part of creation, so God designed that from every part, should that curse, in virtue of Christ's mediation, be finally obliterated. The great issue of redemption is the total repeal of the malediction which human transgression drew forth. The repair is to be co-extensive with the ruin; and although its accomplishment be gradual, this does not militate against its ultimate completion. The lost supremacy shall be recovered for man, and Satan be hurled from every point upon which he hath ever erected the standard of revolt. And we believe it to have been in token of this, and as an earnest of the period when there shall be left no vestige of the curse, that when the Mediator came forth on the errand of redemption, He determined on evincing a sovereignty over the whole of creation; as though He would give evidence, that in every quarter where Satan had taken possession, He was "the Stronger than the strong," and able to dispossess him of his triumph. We fully concur in that view of our Lord's miracles, which represents them as having been designed to shadow forth symbolically every conquest which He was to achieve over moral and physical disorder. It is very observable, that Christ, in the selection of objects upon which to exert miraculous power, did not limit Himself to any one class—He rather took the range of created objects, and from each extracted a demonstration that He was Divine. He went to every department of nature, in order to assert everywhere a recovered Masterhip for man. He wrought miracles upon man himself—healing every form of bodily disease—chasing away every species of corporeal malady. You behold Him disenchaining the captivated spirit, ejecting the fiend, touching the blind and they see, addressing the deaf or the lame, and at once they hear, or speak, or are made whole. He snaps, under the hands of death itself, and the riven body and soul are again brought together in living union. What was this but evincing a mastery over Satan in the triumph he had won over man himself? But our Lord did not limit Himself to the repeal of the curse on humanity alone. Earth had been made barren; and therefore, as if in proof that redemption would ultimately restore the lost fertility to the soil, Christ multiplies by a word a few leaves of trees into sustenance for thousands. The curse had broken the harmonies of creation, and man was in terror of wild beasts, over whom he should have the dominion; Christ goes into the desert, and while there, grappling successfully with the tempter, it is pointedly de-

clared, "He was with the wild beasts." That circumstance is put on record, to mark the controul which Christ exercised over the lower tribes of creation who, since the fall, had been hostile to man; and we learn, that in presence of Satan himself, even the wild beasts revered in our Lord's person the form of humanity, being not found in alliance with guilt. And now there is another department of creation where the curse is at work; and in this department likewise will the Saviour assert His supremacy. In some mysterious manner the elements of nature are under the dominion of Satan; he can evoke the tempest, agitate the sea, put in motion the storm for man's destruction. Christ will attack him in this seat of his dominion; He will show Himself mightier to appease, than Satan to disturb the winds and the waters; and He chooses, for the time of this demonstration, a period when the wind and the sea were tempestuous. He speaks the word, and the storm is hushed, and tranquilly does the ruffled sea subside into calm.

It is in this point of view that we would, in the first instance, regard the miracles before us. It was designed, we believe, to shadow forth the complete triumph of the Redeemer, in expelling the curse wheresoever it had fastened. It was intended to make it plain, that from every point where Satan had ever established his empire, he shall eventually be driven. And we do regard it as at once both an instructive and an encouraging lesson to derive from such a miracle as that under review, namely, a lesson to the universality of that triumph which awaits upon redemption. There is no part of creation on which the curse fastened not; there is no part from which it shall not be finally banished. "The whole creation," it is said, "groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now;" but I learn from the conquest which Christ won over wild beasts in the desert, over demons who held captive the bodies of mankind, over the winds and the waters in their tempestuousness, that a day is yet reserved for earth, when every effect of the curse shall be destroyed. Whatever now mars the happiness of creation shall no longer exist; the blessing shall replace the curse, and not a memento shall be left to remind, in the moral or the material universe, that evil had ever prevailed.

We shall find, however, upon examination, other truths symbolically taught by this miracle, more nearly relating to the present condition of the church at large, or to that of its individual members. We may reasonably suppose that in the performance of this miracle—a miracle which seems to have been specially intended for the observation of His disciples—Christ intended to instruct or encourage them for the duties they would have to discharge as preachers of Christianity. These men who had embarked in this vessel were designed, in the providence of God, to be the agents for diffusing upon earth the knowledge of Christ. They were to go forth after His ascension into heaven, on the errand to publish the Gospel, and win converts to the faith. The world at large, in which they were to labour, may well be compared to a vast ocean, and the church which they were to be instrumental to establish, may be said to resemble a vessel, that for a while had to float on its surface. The Saviour well knew, that many a tempest would assail His followers, and threaten the destruction of themselves as well as of the ship, in which their hopes were embarked. He never shrunk from forewarning His apostles of the danger that awaited them and of the difficulties they would have to encounter if faithful to His cause; on the contrary, He described with minute accuracy the trials to which they would be exposed, and the varieties of conflict they must meet. Tribulation, hatred, persecution, yea, and even death itself, Christ forewarned them to expect in the prosecution of their enterprise. Through them He taught disciples of every future period to anticipate that the vessel of the church would have to make progress over a stormy and perilous sea—ferce winds would hinder its advance, proud waves would threaten to engulf it. The disciples, in the prospect of such trials, naturally shrunk from the thought of separation from their Master. They would feel that His personal sojourn with His church would be almost essential to its preservation; they would deprecate His removal, as tending to aggravate every danger to which it might ever be exposed. Yet Christ's absence was essential to the real welfare of the church. There was an office which He had to perform in behalf of His people, whose performance required that He should be personally present in the upper sanctuary, and not visibly ministering in the

church below. He had to intercede above in behalf of those whom He redeemed upon Calvary; and this work of intercession was just as important to be discharged as the other work of atoning through His obedience unto death. Meanwhile, Christ would teach His followers that although personally absent, His eye would never be removed from His people—He would witness their every struggle, and be ready to impart help in every emergency. Now let us observe how all this was symbolically taught by the occurrence which is under review. "Christ constrains His followers, reluctant as they were, to quit His presence and to embark in a vessel by themselves; He withdraws alone to a mountain, and there spends the season of night in the act of intercession. Dangers presently assail the ship in which His disciples were left. There arose a tempestuous wind, and they struggle almost in vain to make progress over the stormy sea. Apparently they are deserted of their Master, and left to themselves to grapple with the difficulty. Yet far from this; though on the mountain brow and interceding there with God, the eye of the Saviour is bent upon His storm-tossed followers below; and at the fitting moment for the manifestation of His power in their behalf, He descends from the summit whither He had retreated, He moves over the deep, and reveals Himself to His well-nigh desponding disciples. He is welcomed to the vessel in which they are sailing, and in a moment the tempest is stilled, and the vessel is "at the land whither they went." We think there could scarcely be a more instructive or a more animating lesson imparted to the disciples than this miracle may have served to teach. The whole occurrence seems like a symbolical representation of the fortunes of Christ's church, and of the safe issue at which she will ultimately arrive. That vessel in its passage over the sea appears to correspond in figure with the church of the Redeemer upon earth; the tempest in which it was overtaken represents the opposition which in all ages has been arrayed against the true people of God. Meanwhile, Christ is not personally present; He is on the mountain top, actually, indeed, though not visibly, ministering to the welfare of His people. The progress of the vessel is but slow; it is impeded by the various forms of opposition it has to encounter. A long night has been already spent in the effort to evangelize the whole earth, little way has been made towards the desired consummation, and not unfrequently has the safety of the church been apparently perilled by the fierceness of the conflict. And yet there is no ground for despair; the Saviour still watches over His people; He knows the dangers that threaten them; and though the season of succour be deferred, yet we may be sure it is delayed only for the fuller exhibition of the Divine glory. Ere long, and earth shall be trodden once more by the Redeemer. He shall descend from the scene He now occupies, to manifest Himself as mightier than the mightiest of all spiritual antagonists; and then it may be, when the form of the Redeemer is beheld once more by His church, moving over the waves of this troublesome world; and when He is welcomed rejoicingly by His followers, and the grand overthrow of evil is accomplished, every foe put under His feet, and righteousness made everywhere triumphant, then shall there be a sort of realising in respect of the church at large, of what is affirmed in our text—"Then they willingly received Him into the ship, and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went."

We would go on to observe, that from the narrative under review there may be lessons derived, which seem to relate to the spiritual history of individuals, rather than of the church at large. In seeking for those lessons, it is needful to bear in mind the character of the disciples at the period referred to, that we may not wrongly apply the symbolical instruction. Now it is plain, that the faith of the disciples at this period of their history was extremely defective. They had scarcely advanced beyond the lowest stage of belief in Jesus. They owned in some measure the truth of His claim to be Messiah, although they were far enough from being as yet prepared to wrestle boldly in His cause. It would seem, they still lingered to the expectation that He would prove a temporal Prince; we have already hinted the probability that the ground of Christ constraining them to depart was their secret approval of the people's suggestion by force to make their Master a King. This at least shows the imperfect apprehension which they had of the real office of Christ as a spiritual Deliverer; and then in confirmation of this view, it is asserted broadly by

St. Mark, that "their heart was hardened." They were men who as yet were little more than nominally the disciples of Christ. They followed Him, they waited upon His ministry, they adhered to His person; but yet they had not cordially accepted Him as the Saviour; they were not ready, as yet, to die for His sake. In this character therefore they correspond to multitudes of mere professors of Christianity, persons who make a Christian profession, but yet have never heartily embraced the religion of Jesus, and determined upon being guided only by His precepts. It was in these circumstances, you will notice, that the disciples assayed to cross the sea; but they attempted in vain to effect the desired passage; they were opposed by adverse winds and waves, and were all the while troubled with mental disquiet. At length they gain a more distinct apprehension of Jesus; He reveals Himself to them in the midst of their affright and perplexity, and then they willingly received Him into the vessel; and mark the result: no sooner has Christ been received "*willingly into the ship,*" than immediately the ship was at the land whither they went. Is the case never paralleled in the moral history of individuals, that although by name and profession the disciples of Jesus, yet Christ is not with them in the vessel? There is an outward semblance of Christianity, they wait upon the ordained ministry of the Gospel, they attend the stated ordinances of grace; but yet there has been no decided surrender of the heart to Christ, no unequivocal resolve to be guided by no other pilot than the Saviour. And what is the course of such religious professors, if not one of miserably slow progress? They attain not the desired end; there is no solid satisfaction enjoyed. With religion enough to keep them from being thoroughly worldly they have not religion enough to be thoroughly Christian, and thus they make no satisfactory advance; there is no growth in piety, no nearer approximation to heaven. What do we learn from such a miracle as the one before us, if not that Christ must be willingly received into the heart; and then, but not until then, will the wished for consummation be realised? We think there is an especial danger in the present times of multitudes assuming a religious profession, who are yet strangers to vital godliness. Beyond question, it is a day of much outward homage and respect for Christianity; religious topics will be handled by the press, and in conversation, in quarters where some few years back the mere allusion would scarcely have been tolerated. Moreover up to a certain extent, it costs an individual no reproach to maintain a profession of Christianity; you may pay every respect to all the outward forms of religion, without incurring aught in the way of opprobrium. But it follows almost necessarily from this, that what is gained to religion in respect of numbers is frequently lost in respect of value. The religion which meets with no scorn, is very unlike the religion of Him who met upon earth with little else. And it is needful to deliver the caution against taking up with a mere fashionable degree of religious profession. We must predict of such a kind of Christianity that it will not stand its professor in the hour of death or the day of judgment. It is a mercy if God permits such an one to encounter trouble; it is a mercy if he be permitted to realise difficulty and dissatisfaction at not obtaining the promised happiness which piety is said to confer. Such experience may lead to the enquiry—where am I wrong? wherefore do I not gain the coveted haven of peace and of joy? May it not be, that while wearing the semblance of Christ's disciples you have not Christ with you in the ship; you have not yielded up the pilotage of your vessel to Him alone? And oh! if the suspicion of this being the case should lead any one amongst you to honest self-scrutiny; if you should discover that your profession of Christianity has been wanting in singleness of purpose to acknowledge no other Saviour than Jesus, to trust with full reliance upon His merit for acceptance, and to follow Him stedfastly whithersoever He leads; then might we confidently look forward to your advancement in godliness, whatever hindrances might oppose you; and in this rapid growth in grace consequent upon the willing admission of Jesus to be all in all as a Saviour and a Prince, there shall be a kind of acting over afresh of what happened to the disciples, when it is related—"Then they willingly received Him into the ship, and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went."

## THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE COMFORTER.

### A Fourth Sermon,\*

BY THE

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AT PRESENT OFFICIATING IN EXETER HALL.

*"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."*—John xvi. 7.

LAST Lord's day morning I closed my preliminary remarks, on the general declarations of the work and the necessity and value of the Holy Spirit, these are unfolded in various portions of Scripture. I now enter, as I promised, upon some of the personal offices of the Holy Spirit. The office which He is represented as sustaining, in the passage I have read, is that upon which I will speak this morning; namely, the Holy Spirit as the Comforter.

The propriety or justice of the translation of the original word has been the subject of dispute. In the original it is, literally rendered, *the Paraclete*. The very same word is also applied to our Lord, in the epistle of St. John, where it is said—"If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." The original word is—"Paraclete with the Father;" not the word usually applied to our blessed Lord denoting that He is an Intercessor, but another word, denoting that He is a Comforter. The strict meaning of *paraclete* is something like that which we attach to the name "advocate" in Scotland—one that identifies himself with another, takes up another's cause, throws all his energies and sympathies into it, and makes that cause his own, and upholds it as a good and a righteous one. But this is not all. There is embodied in it the element of comfort, or consolation also; and this attribute is so interwoven with our convictions of the office of the Holy Spirit, that we should not be willing to part with it.

There is in this world great necessity, not merely for such a comfort as the promises of the Gospel may convey, but for comfort so vast and varied, that it needs a Divine Person to convey and to impress it. We live in a world in which we need a Comforter. Much there is that is beautiful on earth, but much also that is forlorn. There is no street in this world without its sick-bed; there is no corner of the city without its physician; there is no turning that leads not to a cemetery; and there is no cemetery that is without its graves of all lengths and of all durations. There is not a pillow, in the happiest home on which the sun shines, that has not a thorn in it; and there is not a heart, in which there is not some cankering and vexing feeling, known best and most intimately to itself. One great lesson disclosed by Christianity is impressed upon the experience of every man, in some shape—"Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." We are prone to fancy that every man's lot is better than our own; and the reason of this is, that we are dazzled by mere spangles and glare of circumstance—whereas, if we could penetrate the purple, or look beneath the ermine, or see under the lawn, we should find that

\* For previous Sermons in this Course, see Nos. 1358, 1,361, and 1,349—50.

there are unhappy and restless hearts beating there, just as much as anywhere else. Poor men are often happier in their cabins, than royal men are in their palaces, or noblemen in their halls. But be we where we may, there is only one thing that can make us really happy—that thing which quells all fears within, and triumphs over all fightings without—the possession of the promised Comforter, the Holy Spirit of God.

The promise that is here given by our blessed Lord shows us that we are, in this world, however varied may be its afflictions, capable of comfort. In the regions of the lost there is no capacity, as well as no possibility of comfort; but as long as we are amid the means of grace, there is no sorrow so severe that it cannot be assuaged—there are no tears that can be sown in spring, which shall not bloom in autumn into harvests of joy. As the great revelation of the Gospel is, that there is no sin which cannot be forgiven, so there is no sorrow which cannot be assuaged; as there is no sinner, whose crimes are so deep in their dye that the blood of Jesus cannot take them all away, so there is no weeper, whose wound is so painful and whose sorrow is so poignant that the blessed Comforter cannot heal it.

The Holy Spirit is not only capable of affording comfort, but able and willing to afford it. That He is able, is evident from the fact which I have shown—that that Spirit is God. His consolations are omnipotent consolations. All earthly comfort is represented by a cistern—a thing of finite dimensions, and which needs continually to be filled; nay, it is represented, even when sweetest and purest, by “a broken cistern,” that leaks and lets out its comforts hour by hour: but the consolations that the Gospel ministers to those that need them, are represented by the illimitable and exhaustless main—the great, the self-originating and overflowing fountain. The consolations of the world are the consolations of the footstool—those of the Gospel are the consolations of the throne; the former evaporate like the dew, beneath the beams of the approaching sun—the latter grow and increase in quantity, the more liberally they are drawn and drunk by the children of men.

This Comforter, however, you are to notice in the next place, is called not only a Comforter, but “the Spirit of truth.” And here is a very important distinction, which needs to be impressed; it is, that the Holy Spirit will only comfort man as “the Spirit of truth.” A lie may serve as a momentary opiate, but there is in it nothing of real or of permanent comfort. Hence the comfort which the world gives, but lulls or deadens for an hour; but the comfort which the Holy Spirit of God gives, is a comfort that lasts for ever. The comfort which the world gives, is like the opiate weed in the heart, that makes us forget our pain; the comfort which the Spirit of God gives, is a flower, that blooms upon the stem of everlasting truth, borrows its perennial fragrance from the skies, and remains green and fair and beautiful when all the flowers of mortality are withered and gathered to a common grave. In other words, the Spirit of God will only give comfort through the medium, or in the vehicle of truth. If this be so, let us never attempt to comfort a dying sinner by telling him a lie; let us never shrink from telling the dying the whole truth, under the idea that to tell them all the truth will make them wretched. Better there should be wretchedness felt, in the knowledge of God’s truth, than that there should be comfort dreamed of in the belief of man’s lie; better that there should be disquiet the most saddening to those that are around, rather than the “Peace, peace,” when, “saith my God, there is no peace,” at all.

Having, then, noticed these features in the revelation of the Holy Spirit of God, as the Comforter of His church, let me refer to instances, in which we may presume that this blessed Comforter will exercise especially His consolatory function.

Is there in this assembly some true, but humble Christian, who trembles and fears lest after all, his sins are not forgiven, nor his iniquities blotted out? How does the Spirit of God, as “the Spirit of truth,” bring comfort to that Christian? He will not, as the world does, tell you that sin is a very trivial thing, or that there is nothing in the condemnation of the law which ought to alarm, agitate, or frighten us. The world will say to the dying sinner—‘You have done your duty in the sphere in which you have been placed; your life has been most respectable; at least, you are not as bad as that man, and certainly



you have as good a chance and as bright a hope as this man ! The Spirit comforts not so ; when the Spirit of God comforts, He comforts by conveying to such a doubting sinner the whole truth. And what is that truth ? He " takes of the things of Christ, and shows them " to that sinner, according to the promise of the Gospel, made by our blessed Lord ; He shows that sinner the precious blood, which now, as when shed on Calvary, " cleanseth from all sin ; " He speaks to that dying man's heart what I can only speak to that dying man's ear ; He breathes into that heart tones taken from the jubilee of heaven—He makes the very music of the skies resound in the depths of that human heart—" Son," " daughter," " be of good cheer ; thy sins," through Jesus Christ, " are forgiven thee."

But not only does He show this forgiveness of sins, through the blood of Christ—but He shows to that humbling, doubting, trembling, yet believing Christian, a right and a title to the skies, which nothing else can be a substitute for. He not only shows us that the curse is taken away by a Saviour's blood, but He also shows us that our title to heaven is restored, by the sufficiency of a Saviour's righteousness. Christ's atonement delivers us from the curse—Christ's obedience entitles us to a blessing. By the one our breaking of the law is put away—by the other our obedience to the law is presented. " He who knew no sin, is made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God by Him."

Thus, then, the Comforter, as " the Spirit of truth," comforts the depressed with a knowledge of the efficacy of the blood of Jesus, and of the sufficiency of the righteousness of Jesus.

And now, my dear friends, you and I must lie down and die. There is not a flower so fair, that must not, like the flower of the grass, be withered. Do not then forget, (if I address those who may never hear me again)—do not forget, that the only thing which can give you comfort on a death-bed is this—that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, bore my curse and obeyed the law which I had broken ; and by His suffering I am saved from that curse, and by His righteousness I am entitled to that blessing.

The sense of sin that agitates the Christian, in the hands of Satan might plunge him in despair, or precipitate him into presumption ; but the sense of sin, when it is laid hold upon by the Holy Spirit of God, only leads us to a deeper, richer sense of the Saviour's mercy. And hence, while our sins appear to us, as they must appear in the intense light of eternity, like the great mountains, that Holy Spirit reveals to our heart a Saviour's mercy, which appears like a yet greater sea, that can bury and entomb them all.

In the second place, there may be in this congregation some one who can say, and who is constrained to say—" All God's providential dealings are against me ; I have been afflicted, I am a sufferer, I have lost the loved and the dear ; my estate has been swept from me, the home that I built and under which I hoped to die has been stripped, the property which I accumulated and which was the fruit of my industry has been torn away as by a whirlwind ; and I am desolate." My dear brother, (if such there be,) the Spirit of God is the Comforter that you need. He can show to your heart, what I now show to your ear and to your understanding—that the hand of God may be heavy upon you, while the heart of God overflows with love to you. Nay, we are told that suffering is not a sign or an evidence of a curse, but a privilege : " to you," He says, " it is given to suffer ; " and again,—" whom the Lord loveth"—what ? He makes prosperous and happy ? No—" whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." If there be one man in this assembly, whose life has been one of uninterrupted prosperity, that man has most need to tremble ; but if there be in this assembly one whose life has been a series of successive and all but crushing calamities, that man should lift up his head to the everlasting hills, and read written by the Spirit of God, upon those tablets which man's hand cannot deface—" Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." Have you lost your property ? God remains. Are you poor in time ? It may be that you may be rich in eternity. Has your estate perished ? It may be that your soul may be saved. Has the gourd been cut down in a night ? It may be that you may repose beneath the shadow of the Rock of Ages—the Lord Jesus Christ, your Saviour. And these precious

truths the Spirit of God takes ; and He does what I cannot do—imprints them on the heart, and helps those who know them in their heads to feel them as living vital realities in their inmost souls.

Again : are you placed, as Christians, under reproaches ? Are you calumniated ? Are you misrepresented in the discharge of duties which you feel to devolve upon you ? Are you exposed to “the proud man’s contumely and the coarse man’s scorn ?” In standing up in the sphere in which Providence has placed you, and protesting against what is wrong, and contending for what is right, are you liable to misrepresentation, calumny, and mockery ? There is One who can comfort you under it ; the Spirit of God will remind you of that text—“For Thy sake I have borne reproach.” Christ’s name was taken away, before His life. He was persecuted and crucified in His name, before He was crucified in His person. And we are told by Peter, what the Spirit of God can impress upon us, “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ”—what ? Sad are ye ? To be pitied are ye ? No ; “if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye.” And on what account ? Because you do not care ? Because you are stoical enough to be impenetrable ? or because you have excitements enough around you to divert you ? No ; “for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.” Here is the consolation. If there be one spot upon the earth, on which that heavenly Dove rests, and spreads His overshadowing wings, and diffuses all the fragrance of the sky, it is the heart of a reproached, calumniated man. And therefore, “if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.”

Are there in this congregation some who say—“Once indeed we had all the sensations of Christian happiness ; we were full of joy, when first we knew the Lord ; but all these feelings have become deadened, and all those joys have palled ?” There is comfort in that Comforter for you. When you first emerged from darkness to light, you were dazzled by the glorious change ; your excitement and your joy were commensurate with that change. Your eyes have now been accustomed to its splendour ; you have lived and rejoiced long amid its glories. You must not expect that the enthusiasm of your youth will last through your riper and maturer years. It may be, that the strong emotions, which burst from your heart in the dawn of your Christian life, may have sobered down into that deep, steadfast, and enduring principle which is more precious than all. Do not forget that the absence of joy is not necessarily the loss of an interest in Christ. It is possible to be a son, and yet to be sorrowful : it is possible to have nothing in possession, but beyond the skies and in bright and blessed reversion to have “a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” May the Spirit of God imprint that upon our hearts ! For what is wanted in our churches is not more light, which the minister can give, but more life, which the Spirit of God alone can give. And I am quite sure of this, that if there were in our pews more of secret prayer that God would accompany His truth with His own power, there would be richer and more blessed spectacles exhibited by the whole church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the next place, are there any in this assembly, who feel that once they seemed to live (as it were) beneath the sunshine of the countenance of God ; all things seemed bright and merry as the summer-day ; but all this, they feel, has utterly departed ? They think that God has at length forsaken them, and their God has finally forgotten them. They are cast down, and dejected and depressed, and appear sometimes trembling on the verge of despair. If there be any such in this assembly, let me intimate a distinction, which I can explain, but which the Comforter alone can impress so as to comfort you : there may be day-light, when there is no sun-light. This is the experience of every one. God gives the sun-light, when it is most seasonable for the ripening of the fruits of the earth ; but He gives the day-light according to His everlasting and irreversible covenant. Your sun-light may be removed for good and gracious ends, but your day-light may still be continued. Sun-light is assurance, which is the privilege of the few ; day-light is salvation, which is the real possession of all true Christians. God may not give you the first, because it is inexpedient for you ; God will not withdraw from you the last, for it is His own promise to continue it. God may sustain you the most,

even with "the overwhelming grief" whilst He comforts you the least. Our Lord upon the cross was sustained completely, whilst He was not comforted at all. "My God, My God—there was his sustaining grasp; "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"—there is the absence of all consolation. And so it will be still; as it was with the Master, so it will be with the servant—as it was with Christ, so it will be with the Christian. Our faith may be strong, and God's hold of us unchangeable, whilst our comforts may be gone and our consolations few. If God the Spirit will be pleased to impress this upon a Christian's heart, it is a lesson more precious than the gold of Inde, or the perfumes of "Araby the blessed."

Is there in this assembly some believer who says and feels—"I am harassed with temptation?" Every Christian must be conscious of temptation. Do not thoughts sometimes originate within you, which have no sooner spread their dim and distant shades into shape and reality, than you hate, and abhor, and shrink from them? Have not even atheistical thoughts, sceptical thoughts, infidel thoughts, unholy thoughts, swept through your minds and grieved your hearts, whilst you were conscious of their presence? So it has been, and so it will be. "Think it not strange," says the apostle, "concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing had happened to you." Job was tempted and tried; the royal psalmist had the discords of Satan thrown into his sweetest songs; and if you were without such temptations, you would be without evidence that you belonged to the great family of Christ. Satan lets the weeds alone—he tries only to corrupt, and blast, and wither the flower. Satan, sure of his own, gives them undisturbed peace; but the instant that the prey begins to escape from his fangs, and the victim of his wiles rises to become a son of God, Satan interposes to tempt, to try, to curse, and to destroy. "Think it not strange." The Spirit of God will open your eyes, to see Christ interceding for you in heaven, whilst you are struggling on earth, as Moses interceded on the mountain, whilst the Israelites were warring in the valley below. Whilst we are toiling at the oar, and contending with the stormy and tempestuous sea, Christ is on the mountain-side, as of old, praying, or marching upon the mountain-ways, and making the angry sea a pathway to come and deliver His own. Poor human nature, since the days of the apostles, cries in its agony—"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The Holy Spirit teaches that nature now, as He taught it in the days of Paul, to say—"Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Thus, then, the Spirit comforts believers. He is the Comforter—Christ always the subject of His comfort; or, in other words, the Spirit is the Comforter as "the Spirit of truth," and only by the truth does He comfort believers.

Let me notice a few corollaries to be drawn from the remarks I have already made.

The Holy Spirit is the best and most precious Comforter of all. All the consolations of time may decay, or become diluted; but the Spirit of God says, as the words breathed through the lips of Jeremiah—"I satisfy the weary soul, I replenish the sorrowful soul." The Spirit of God takes (if I may so express myself,) a leaf from the tree of life, and lays that leaf close upon the broken heart of the humble and sorrowing believer. That Holy Spirit takes the truths that are radiated from the sun, and (something like a great discovery in the age in which we live,) makes the very beams that come from "the Sun of righteousness" print and impress the likeness of the glorious Original upon the living tablets of believers' hearts. His consolations penetrate the heart, as the dews and the rains of heaven penetrate the willing soil. The heart grows happy, and the soil becomes prolific. "I will," says He to Hosea, "I will allure her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her;" so it is in our translation, but it is literally and strictly translated,—"*speaking to her heart.*"

In the second place, the Holy Spirit is the best Comforter, because He cannot misapprehend or mistake the real case of believers. You are aware, that if one is labouring under some bodily disease, and if the physician, by the frailty of humanity and the ignorance of human science, should mistake the

disease, and prescribe for one a prescription that is only applicable to another, he aggravates the malady, instead of curing it; and very frequently when a brother mourns under sorrow of heart, or depression, or calamity, we poor miserable comforters, go to him and aggravate his sorrow, instead of assuaging it. When we meet with some one who mourns deeply and bitterly because of some overwhelming loss, I believe that under such loss the less we say the better; there is something so great in the calamity, and something so little in all our comforts, that we had better be silent. And when we do speak in order to comfort, let us never say—"Do not weep; it cannot be helped." That will not comfort—it will only embitter the sorrow. Admit the calamity to be sore, admit the grief to be just and only adequate to the occasion; but point to the eternal Fountain that overflows with compensatory joy, draw the heart from the green sod on which it lingers, to the bright throne on which Jesus sits. Bring that spirit from communion with the dead, that provokes only its tears, to communion with a living Saviour, who can wipe all those tears away. And because the Holy Spirit knows all things, as the omniscient and omnipresent Spirit of God, He may appoint that which afflicts us—but it will be that which is best for us. He may contradict our plans, He may withhold our wishes, but He will nevertheless order all wisely, and bestow all mercifully. Leave that Spirit to His own way, and He will spread His wings over the troubled chaos of the wrecked and shattered heart, and bring order out of chaos, harmony out of discord, and light out of darkness.

In the third place, the Spirit of God is the best Comforter, because others, however adequate, may be unable to reach us; He never can be unable. "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me." And therefore the consolations of the Spirit of God can descend to the miner in his subterranean walks, can rise to the Alpine herdsman on the loftiest peak, can minister consolation to the captive in his cell, and impart everlasting joy to that silent and solitary weeper, whose sorrows are too big for expression, and whose griefs can find no tears to be the channel for their exit. There is no sorrow so hidden, that the Holy Spirit cannot see it; there is no weeper so distant, that that Spirit cannot reach him.

In the next place, other comforters may be weary. The comforter by the bed of the dying may grow tired; the hand may weary in presenting that cup; the heart may faint and fail in the expression of those sympathies. But this blessed Comforter never wearies: "I, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faint not, neither am weary."

Other comforters are frequently withdrawn, when their comforts are most needed. The consolations of the earth are, from their very nature, transient and temporary; they are like the summer brooks, that are fed by the summer showers; they rush, full and overflowing, for a day, and then leave their channels dry. But the consolations which the Holy Spirit gives, are like those streams which are full in the summer, when other streams are dry and other fountains exhausted.

Then, my dear friends, to you who are the people of God, what elements of comfort are there in that blessed Gospel with which you are acquainted! Can that spirit sink amid the stormy waves of the world, that has an Omnipotent arm to lean on? Can that soul be without comfort, in the deep cells of which are sounding the very echoes of the voice of God? Can that man despair, who feels that he is the friend of Jesus, the protégé of the Most High? Is it not unspeakable comfort, that the Holy Spirit the Comforter himself dwells in the depths of my heart, and makes that heart to be a fane and a temple for His residence? Shall I desecrate that temple by a suspicion, shall I darken it by a doubt, that He who is the omnipotent Comforter cannot comfort me? "Blessed," then, "are the people that know the joyful sound; happy is that people, whose God is the Lord."

There may be in this assembly some to whose minds the suggestion will

occur this day—"Doth he not speak parables?" All will seem mystery to some, fanaticism to others, and extravagance to more. Christians will feel that what I have spoken is truth, and that my sentiments have awakened echoes of sweet music within them; but those who are not Christians—and it is not uncharitable to suspect, that there may be some such here present—for baptism does not make us Christians; going to the Lord's table does not make us Christians; having a pew in the house of God does not make us Christians; wearing the name, and speaking the shibboleth, and being covered with the badge of a party, does not make us Christians: the Spirit of God changing the heart alone can make us Christians:—some, then, there are, in this assembly, who are not Christians—who may feel that all I said is a mystery; there is no response to it in their hearts; they cannot understand it; it is as if I were writing demonstrations in a character which they cannot read, or speaking in a tongue which they cannot understand. Then, my dear friends, will this teach you? You have sorrow, for which you have no balm; you have troubles, which nothing upon earth has comforted you under; you yourselves feel that you are dying, and passing to the judgment-seat of God. What have you instead of the Gospel? What comfort can you appeal to, richer than the consolations of the great Comforter himself? Compare what you have to cling to, with what a Christian has; and the comparison may prompt you to lay hold on His garment, and beg Him to allow you to go with Him, for He alone has that which can do you good. Let me ask you, my dear friends, if there be such present as those to whom I have referred—let me ask you, what you have to go to in the hour of trial. Mother, when you lose your babe—what comforts you? Child, when you lose your parent—what comforts you? Husband, when you lose your wife—what comforts you? What have you to look to? What are you? Whither are you going? What explains this tangled web of human life? Where is the light, that will open up all its mystery? Where is the fountain, that will give comfort in any of its troubles? My dear friends, stoicism cannot; human nature cannot; kings and queens and emperors cannot. But this blessed Book can. It points you to a home beyond the skies, from which no vicissitude can pluck your dear and cherished ones away; and it points you to a Comforter, who tells you of One that shall be more than father and mother, and sister and brother, and husband and wife—Jesus Christ, "all our salvation, and all our desire." Ask Him, the Comforter, to teach you the mystery, for He is the Teacher also.

May that blessed Spirit imprint these truths upon our hearts, and make them to us life and peace and joy; and to His name be the praise and glory.

## NO TEMPLE IN HEAVEN.

### A Funeral Sermon,

BY THE

REV. JOHN J. DAY, M.A.

Assistant Minister of St. Matthew's, Denmark Hill

PREACHED IN ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, GORDON SQUARE,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 10, 1847.

On the Death of the Wife of the Rev. Henry Hughes, Minister of the Church

*"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved, shall walk in the light of it."—Revelation xxi. 22—24.*

It must ever be the experience of the child of God, that Scripture most abundantly meets his necessities and wants. For, does he find himself a sinner, oftentimes doing those things he ought not, and things, too, which he wished and intended never to have done?—he has comforting assurances that sin's thralldom shall one time be removed, and himself be made "more than conqueror" over it and its consequences. Is he ever cast down by manifold afflictions, so that anxiety on anxiety, in ceaseless, wave-like succession, seems to roll over him; and as he is continually struggling, does he fear he shall be hopelessly submerged, and finally prove a castaway?—he is told in the words of inspiration—"Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God: when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the floods they shall not overflow thee;" and "as thy day is, so shall thy strength be." Again, when gloomy thoughts of humanity's last conflict darken his peace—when he forecasts his great enemy grappling with him to tear from his body the precious life, and he fears the anguish endured as life leaves successively limb and sinew at the summons of death—then he is told that he can, as a believer, use this language—"O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?" and that though death may over his body for a time gain the mastery, yet is it only for a short season, while his soul, as a child of God, is unscathed, unhurt.

Now, brethren, in preaching a funeral sermon over an important member of this congregation, whom those of us who knew—and it was almost all—without exception loved and highly valued, it seemed to us that we could hardly do better than choose our subject from that last, glorious revelation God gave to His servant John. The believers of those days found it to be "through much tribulation" that heaven's road was to be trodden, heaven's bliss attained; and hence the Spirit, to help their infirmities and cheer them on to life and immortality, designs in this book to picture before their eyes its glories and wonders. We, brethren, here, in losing friends—in the perplexities of life or—in feeling the deep-rooted wants of our nature, and its boundless cravings, need like exhortation. Heaven, brethren, is still open for us. Our connection with eternal realities is not less than that of others gone before; and if we feel cast down at our course and its consequences, the "joys which are at God's right hand, the pleasures for evermore," where Christ reigns high above all principality and power, may be useful in quickening, comforting, and building us up. Brethren, may you and I be washed in Christ's blood, sanctified by Christ's Spirit!—and so shall we, all our troubles over, with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the rest of God's chosen people, inhabit hereafter that blessed place described in our text. "And I saw no temple therein. for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city

had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved, shall walk in the light of it.

We purpose here, brethren, drawing your attention to the two striking features pictured of heaven—first, that there is “no temple therein,” and secondly, that the light of the sun and the moon are not known in it; and, thirdly, in the character of its inhabitants, we shall, for a brief season, set forth the character of her who has been taken from us, so that, if the will of God be so, we may derive some practical instruction from her example, and be urged on with greater decision in the paths of righteousness and peace.

I. First of all, brethren, therefore, we inquire into the *spiritual* condition of the place described in our text.

The place itself we have already said to be heaven; not, indeed, the heaven (as appears) that now is, but the heaven to come, the “new heaven,” which with the “new earth” is hereafter to be created, when the day of judgment is over and the resurrection day has commenced its shining. In the heaven that now is, we find, from St. John, that a temple exists. We should, indeed, have expected it, from the repeated accounts we have of the prayers and praises of the saints there offered; but we are told so in two express and important passages, which conclude the truth of it. In one, the eleventh chapter, and latter part, we read, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ;” and after the four and twenty elders worship and praise the Most High for the arrival of that glorious period—“We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty,” it is expressly added, that “the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament.” But again, in the fifteenth chapter, it is told us more at large. The holy choir of the glorified had just sung the song of Moses and the Lamb; “And after that I looked,” the apostle writes in the fifth verse, “and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony was opened: and seven angels came out of the temple;” and in the eighth verse, “the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled”—where, you observe, the existence of the temple is in the strongest way asserted; the stress not being laid on its being there, but only on the fact, that there existing, and having been closed, it was opened.

But still further, while we say this is manifestly declared in the two verses we have quoted, it would appear also from the assertion of the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews. You remember the stress laid on, first, the tabernacle in the wilderness, and the building of the temple on the two several occasions. St. Paul says of the priests who offered gifts in the one then standing, “who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things”—thereby implying that the temple on earth was a type of something in heaven. Again, yet more distinctly, in the ninth chapter, at the twenty-fourth verse: “Christ is not entered into holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself”—where it is evidently set forth that the temple “made with hands,” with its various divisions, was in some sort a figure, an emblem, of that made without hands, reared in heaven. And therefore, combining these passages together, we find in the heaven that now is, where the ransomed, walking in white, and freed from pain, offer up hallelujahs of joy and songs of triumph, there is a temple. Yes, there is a place there marked off from all others, where God and the Lamb especially dwell, where they show the glories of their being, whence they shine forth, as their seat, to those whom they please, and where the saints, when freed from the burden of this flesh, worship God “day and night in His temple;” but in the new heavens, when God shall make all things new, there there is not to be one. That apparently most essential place for worship and adoration is wanting; so that it seemed to the holy apostle a thing to be noted: “And I saw no temple therein.”

What, then, do we gather from this? What that while there is represented as being a temple now in the blessed realms where the departed righteous walk and dwell, there is to be none in the dispensation following the glorious resurrection? What else but that its bliss is to be of the most transcendent and exalted description? We know not yet what we shall be, but this we know, “when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

And the changes, brethren, which pass over the believer, only give us the most distant idea of what he will become. See the child of man given up to his passions, carried by them at their will whithersoever they please; or one perhaps, like many, without gross sin, but living in forgetfulness of God; and there you see a being day by day and hour by hour increasing in alienation of heart from Him who alone can save and bless him. On he is borne in heedlessness and sin, his heart becomes harder, his conscience more benumbed, all spiritual desires and yearnings after better things are more thoroughly each hour extinguished within him. And when, warned of death and judgment to come, he thinks of repenting, he finds the extreme strength of his self-chosen master, and that he cannot turn, as he one time felt sure he could, to repentance and calling upon God. See him as he draws near the grave. The world is gradually loosened from his grasp; and as invisible things are more clearly revealed, all that opens on him is the "blackness of darkness" destined for the lost. No Saviour occurs to his sight. He has no confidence in God as reconciled to him, no anticipations of heaven as about to open on him; but amid the temporary cessations of the pain he feels each moment, his bodily framework gives way; there is nothing to cheer or animate his soul, he only has the internal sinkings of a bitter despair. But let Christ come to that man, let the Holy Spirit work in him, and he is turned from death to life—a calmness he has, a peace, to which he was previously wholly a stranger, and sometimes a triumphant assurance of the fulness of joy. Great, brethren, is the change which takes place on such an alteration. Believers oftentimes hardly can estimate it: the change that has passed over them was so gradual and slow, the light beams of heaven so warily (as it were) struck on their eyes, that it all appeared to come as a matter of course; and hence they are sometimes greatly disquieted, and fearful lest they be hypocrites or self-deceivers after all. But the change that has come over them is great. They love the brethren now because they are brethren; God's temple, God's service, God's cause, they have an interest in, because it is God's; and communion with God and the Lamb they so enjoy, that they frequently can exclaim, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and I have none upon earth I desire beside Thee. My soul followeth hard after Thee. As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." Yea, it is their only grief that these feelings are not constant. Hence a Divine joy and fellowship, which no mere professor can possess, is their privilege, their desire, and possession.

But great as this change is from what they were before God's Spirit shined into their hearts, when they die a much greater takes place. Here on earth, though their privileges were great, they had also misgivings. Though one day in God's courts was often better to them than a thousand, yet during many days were they so dead, so cold, so hardened, that they could not feel His presence, or enjoy His peace. After some spiritual communion of holy fervour, in which they have almost been able to see within the veil, when earth has appeared an insignificant point, its cares, its pleasures, its employments alike "lighter than the dust on the balance," they have been thrust back, so to speak; sin has gained an advantage; worldly ambition, worldly enmities, worldly courses, possibly even worldly offences have been yielded to, and God and the Lamb been forgotten, slighted, or dishonoured. None but the backsliding believer knows the acuteness of the pain such transgression causes. How he longs for the time when "sin shall have no more dominion over him!" "Woe is me that I dwell in Meshech!" "Oh! that I had wings like a dove; then would I flee away and be at rest." Yes, when this time has come the change is far greater—greater than he anticipated. Blessed spirit! when once thou art released from the body of sin and death, thou art in felicity. "Absent from the body, thou art present with the Lord" in paradise. As thou gradually disengagest thyself from the "earthly house of the tabernacle" thou one time dwelt in, I cannot follow thee in thy flight to brighter, better worlds, or see where thou openest the skies or how thou interest; I can only witness the faltering breath, the glazing sight, the restless limbs, and that cold dew of death, which thou dost shed on thy late companion as an evidence of thy departure. For thyself thou hast cut through the chamber, thou hast passed through the heavens to thy Saviour and God. And then, brethren, the believer faints no more, neither is wearied in his spiritual course. The light of heaven clears away all his ignorance; the strength of heaven removes all his weakness; and the joy of heaven, swept as from a thousand harps of living gold, fills him with delight unspeakable, and transport beyond utterance. God he worships in His real shekinah;



the Lamb "whom having not seen" on earth "he loved," he here sees on His throne to love a thousand-fold more; and the Spirit for which on earth he prayed, and sometimes with a show of earnestness, he here surrenders to and receives without reserve, without restraint. Where the four beasts and four-and-twenty elders worship, he is present. The songs that pass in mighty chorus from the multitudes already gone before, he takes up, and swells the blessed strains. Brethren, we can only slightly conceive the holy eagerness wherewith a new inhabitant would follow where led, would learn what instructed, would worship when told, would cast down his crown and sceptre before the Lamb in His temple. "Thou art worthy to receive honour, and glory, and dominion, and wisdom, and power, and might, for Thou hast redeemed us by Thy blood."

Yet, while we cannot tell what they really are, the spirits of the departed righteous are, immediately they die, in everlasting felicity; but great as this felicity is, without the alloy of care or woe, yet after the final consummation of all things it will be greater. Then we shall have our glorified bodies; and as we know the various pleasures which even these, though sinful, infirm, are made the channel of imparting here below, so "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality," we shall through them also be made capable of enjoying infinitely more glory than before. But especially will it be in the enjoyment of God. In the heavens as they now are, we have seen a temple is marked off, so that Deity shows Himself to the saints from some place He has chosen as His abode; but in the times we are speaking of, a change is made, to increase this happiness, to augment this glory. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people; and God himself shall be with them and be their God, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write, for these words are true and faithful." No longer therefore, brethren, shall even the redeemed have to visit a place where God reveals himself, or shows the shining of His glory. Still less will they have to visit a place as at a distance from them, where they will worship and praise Him, but Himself will dwell in them and they in Him. "There will be no temple there, but God himself and the Lamb." Then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be "all in all." The holy joyous atmosphere, as it were, in which the saints will reign, will be God himself. God and the Lamb, united in all His perfections, in all His love, in the creations of His wisdom, in the fruition of His bliss, in the communication of His glory—God will dwell in them, and they in Him. During eternity, as one endless ceaseless Sabbath, they will worship and adore. Whatsoever they do with the organs and capabilities of their spiritual bodies, whatsoever converse carry on, pleasures enjoy, they will do all in God as their temple, and to the glory of Him and the Lamb. Indissolubly and eternally united, the prayer of our agonising Lord will then be fulfilled: "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one." So, brethren, will fallen creatures, who are washed and sanctified by the blood of the Lamb and the Spirit of our God, be ennobled. As kings and priests living in the Infinite, as their vast and penetrating and living temple, will they adore and reign. No more weakness is there. No spiritual decays, no flagging inconstant love, no barren lifeless service, but themselves as worshippers animated, and quickened, and pervaded by Deity, so that to them, and with them, and in them, God and the Lamb shall be "all in all," they will exist and rule throughout all generations. "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved, shall walk in the light of it."

II. But, secondly, we have to consider its *material* character.

The apostle has been very minute in his account of the New Jerusalem. He describes its surpassing brightness and splendour, having the glory of God;

"and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Its twelve gates too were each severally of one pearl; its street was "pure gold, as it were glass,"—herby wishing us to know, that everything on earth which we admire, the most beauteous creations of God's power here below, are, taken singly, too inadequate to bring before our eyes the visions he beheld. Hence he joins the jasper to the crystal, and gives to the rich and deep brilliancy of burnished gold the transparency of glass. With gates each of pearl-like, heavenly whiteness, its street or most common part had, as it were, the most precious earthly substance for its flooring. Besides this, over and from the New Jerusalem, in all her vastness, there was shed forth a light or glory of jasper hues blended with the crystal. Like the first flush of the morning in tropical skies, when the slowly rising sun tinges, with liquid purple, the golden white transparency of the atmosphere—so, only in infinitely greater richness and beauty, did the light from this saintly blessed city appear to the beloved disciple. So that his thoughts reverting to the earth of which he was yet an inhabitant, he contrasts it most powerfully. He tells us it altogether transcends it. The most glorious thing we know materially allows him in some feeble way to pourtray its hues and describe its splendours; but as the most precious spiritual privilege men on earth possess, namely, access to God, where He reveals His glory, is here done away with, because His people actually live in Himself, and he dwells in all His spirituality in them, so light, that most beautiful thing to the material senses, is also, in its derived streams, alike unknown—light on which the infant smiles, with which it toys—the sun, the monarch of the skies, who in his unwearied round day by day refreshes and gladdens the earth, the source and mover of the element, he is no longer needed. At the final judgment he will become "black as sackcloth of hair," and for ever pass away. But to the nations of them that are saved, it is to give them greater glory and beauty. "And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." The apostle seems to labour in showing how completely the creation is merged to the saint, and lost in the Creator.

But, brethren, we have to remark what all this shows. As the absence of the temple bespeaks the fullest perfection of our *spiritual* natures, when the believer will awake up after God's image, the reflection of his Creator, the absence of the sun and of the moon, which give light unto the world in regular alternations, seems also to forecast the complete consummation of his *material* framework. I am here a compound being made up of body and soul. I cannot be happy except the wants and cravings of these two are in some way met and satisfied. Sin, besides, has so marred the one that it has lost the empire God gave it over the other, or rather, is prone to pervert it to unholy purposes. But when a man is "a new creature in Christ Jesus," old things pass away; with his soul feeding by faith on Christ, he has to keep under his body and bring it into subjection, and a holy life then is required, holy material acts; that is, the brain must think for God's honour and service on earth, the hands must handle and work not for themselves only, but for the benefit of Christ's church, the feet must walk and the heart must beat, not to please themselves, but their neighbour, for his edification. Remember that a holy life principally has respect to our neighbours; and some Christian men, my brethren, may be said to be more exact in their duties towards God than in those towards men. They read their Bibles, they pray, they talk much and boldly, they attend Divine service, but in the little, or rather the *great* acts of daily life, there is frequently a lamentable falling off. In just, and righteous and generous dealing, it not seldom happens, such are beneath, inferior to, outshone by worldly men, who make no profession at all, and even glory in making none. No, brethren, a holy life is to be exhibited in the world, throughout the business, amidst friends, and in the family. Besides the inhabitation of God in your souls through the Spirit, the life of Christ is to regulate your bodies and their impulses. Man is a material being as well as a spiritual. When he dies, it is true, he casts aside his body; his framework with all its temptations is then left behind, and his soul passes before the tribunal of the bar of God. But all this is only for a time; the body is to come again to the spirit, and his compound character of soul and body is to be maintained throughout eternity. It is suspended for a while, but one day all mankind will re-enter their bodies "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when the trump shall sound." Enoch and Elijah, and above all, Jesus Christ are in heaven in their

bodies, and similar to their present ones in all probability will ours be ; theirs indeed has seen no corruption ; but from the charnel house, lost in dust, or dissipated in the air, our bones will come each to his fellow, and sinews will fasten them, and fatness enwrap and flesh cover them, and then we shall again tenant them, and thus be changed. Here, brethren, however, being material, the present influences of the atmosphere, and of the sun and moon, are necessary for our development and growth, they are indispensable for our health, and even through our bodies act on that hidden agent which dwells within, mysteriously diffused through the whole, namely, the immortal spirit ; but in the world to come the bodies of the righteous being glorified, consummated and perfected, will no longer need it, or rather needing that which is higher, more efficient, more blissful, more holy, they will possess and enjoy it to the full. The inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, raised in the scale of being, will have, as they will require, a more Divine principle of life within them, a more holy atmosphere of life without them. They are to dwell in God, and God in them ; " God and the Lamb shall be the light thereof ; " there will be there no gloom, no losing of light in darkness, no overclouding of the sky, no eclipsing of that object which is the light of life, but one sacred, high, eternal noon. And " there shall be," says the inspired penman, " no night there ; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light." That which quickens on earth, which awakens, which refreshes, will then be away ; no rest will be needed to recruit our energies, no earthly light to pass through our eyes, as a channel to invigorate the brain, or cheer the intelligence, but as spiritually, so materially, in every sense shall we be perfect. Happy, thrice happy place, brethren ; happy because holy, complete because God is there. May it be yours and mine to enter and for ever inhabit it ; replete with the Deity, illuminated by His splendours, tenanted by His essence ! Blessed are they that shall walk within it. " And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the brightness thereof. And the nations of them which are saved, shall walk in the light of it."

Such, brethren, is a slight description of the heavenly Jerusalem : the new heavens and new earth to be created hereafter. May we not truly say— " Glorious things are spoken of thee, thou city of our God ? " Blessed indeed shall he be, who will have right to the tree of life, and shall enter by the gates into this city. Blessed are they who, now in heaven—formerly inhabitants with us on this earth—look forward securely and happily to its glories and bliss. But, brethren, while we may in our hearts congratulate these, it is for us to remember, that a certain number only of earth's inhabitants will find admission. We do not mean, brethren, that any of you are predestined to be lost ; God forbid the fearful thought. Into the secret things of God we presume not to pry ; but we tell you, " many will say in that day, Lord, Lord open unto us," and then shall be made answer, " I know you not, whence you are ; depart, ye workers of iniquity." Now Christ bids us summon you all to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The way of salvation you know, and its supports you know. " Christ is the way, the truth and the life ; whosoever cometh to the Father by Him shall be saved." Have you attended to the account Scripture has enabled us to give of heaven hereafter ? Did a wish, brethren—my younger hearers—steal through your hearts—' oh ! God give me when I die to be admitted therein ? ' You remember the terms of admission, bear in mind also the standard of rejection. " The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and all liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Every pain you have, or sigh you heave, every friend you lose, or bell that tolls, are as voices proclaiming trumpet-tongued from heaven—" Be ye also ready ; " be watchful, be in earnest. The day is coming on apace, when what you have occasional misgivings about will truly come to pass and have their accomplishment in you ; when " the keepers of the house will tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows shall be darkened, and the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken." Oh ! brethren, what will you then feel Christ to be ? If you make the Lord now your refuge, and the Most High your habitation, then whatever you go through, great shall be your joy at the last. Christ will support you, whispering that He is yours and you are His ; heaven will open its gates to you, and

partially disclose its crystal glories and golden streets, while angel voices shall sound sweetly in your ears, amid the wreck of nature, the agonies of death, and it may be, the depression of your soul, telling you, in a little time all will soon be over ; that *they* are waiting to carry you to its bliss, to usher you into the presence of God and the Lamb. Yes, brethren, when earthly care can do nothing, the assiduity of friends to the dying man is as a thing of nought, even their forms disappear before his closing eyes, and the last most loving pressure he cannot reciprocate ; then the love of Christ will be found to pass knowledge, the value of His service then to exceed estimation ; and as with unearthy vigour, he may be helped in his last struggle, as many are, to say—" Oh ! death, where is thy sting ? oh ! grave, where is thy victory ? thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord,"—He shows us before hand the infinite consequence of being saved here. God grant that you may be of this mind. But contrariwise, if these things make no impression on us :—" Because I have called and ye refused, I stretched out My hand and no man regarded ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; then shall you call upon Me, but I will not answer ; you shall seek Me early, but shall not find Me." " You shall eat of the fruit of your own way, and be filled with your own devices ; but whoso hearkeneth unto Me, shall dwell safely, and be quiet from fear of evil."

But, brethren, in thus far speaking to you, as the living, on the living arguments of God's Holy Word, we have been using the glories and bliss of heaven as an inducement to you,—*you* that are righteous, to go on your course with greater holiness and alacrity ; *you* that are thus far heedless, to diligently, and in earnest, ponder your ways ; but our application to you must now be more restricted and particular.

Christian brethren, the reason of my now officiating is, that we have all lately lost a dear friend, and that too almost suddenly. There was one among us lately, who though not strong, yet, as we hoped, and had grounds for expecting, would have remained much time longer with us here below—who looked forward to your re-assembling in this generously decorated church,\* and taking her seat with you as a fellow-worshipper in these courts of the Lord's house ; but now she is removed from our midst ; God's " ways not being as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts." My brethren, you know her " walk and conversation." You that were poor knew,—yet you knew it not all—the love and affectionate interest she took in your concerns, both spiritual and temporal. You that had the privilege of being her friends, have witnessed—but neither have you seen the whole of this—the quiet, Christian, consistent walk wherewith in her responsible station, struggling with a weak and fragile framework, " she fulfilled her course." My dear brethren, and especially my Christian female hearers, bear in mind that in the quiet overcoming of sin, the unobtrusive surrender of self, the meekly accomplishing unseen and perhaps irksome duties, there is a high order of Christian attainment developed, which in the great day of account will be blessed indeed. You that knew our beloved Christian friend now in heaven, and can call her to your mind as she sat in the house, mixed with society, devoted herself to the charitable institutions connected with your church—we feel, that, you being our judges, it is not too much to say, she wonderfully exhibited such Christian temper and Christian perfectness. Some, when active, require praise—are not content if unknown, but expect notoriety to set forth their deeds and herald their fame ; but, brethren, as a beloved wife, and an affectionate mother, and kind-hearted friend, she evinced that she loved the praise of God rather than heeded the praise of men. A Christian calmness and retirement and sobriety was hers ; but, notwithstanding, amidst the anxieties attending your now bereaved minister's removal to this larger sphere of Evangelic employment, here, though a gentle spirit, was yet bold, and able to encourage and cheer him on his onward, and then difficult, course. And oftentimes, brethren, we believe, you as a people would have suffered, had she not been his ready support and sufficient stay. Such, then, was her life—retiring, but not slothful ; quiet, but not inactive.

Of her last moments, so sudden was the onslaught of mortality's dread foe, we have not much to record. Taken, as many of you have heard, with a faintness, which, more or less, continued during the two hours and a half of her illness, she had not strength or power to say much. But what was said, marked out

\* The church had been recently painted and beautified.

as with a sun-beam the principles which lived and ruled within her. On a friend's remarking, "What a mercy is it you have not now to seek a refuge!" she fell in with the sentiment, and answered feelingly, that it was true; and weakness on this, or pain, forcing a gentle moaning, almost inaudible, the dying saint shuddered at the thought, and inquiring aloud, as it were, of her conscience, "Is this murmuring?" and reverently adding, "If so, God forgive me!"—evincing here her diffidence, and humility, and anxiety not to offend. Indeed, her disregard of self throughout the whole of her brief sickness, was remarkable. She was again reminded of Christ's love: "Unto you that believe, Christ is precious." A pressure of the friend's hand was as her dying testimony to that blessed truth; and acute suffering then coming on her weakened framework, in less than an hour her soul passed to that place where there is no more pain, nor voice of weeping, but where, in the bosom of God, it awaits the glories to be revealed at the coming of Jesus Christ. Of death, brethren, there was no terror; of judgment, no alarm; of things that shall happen at that mysterious moment, which many have longed to unveil, when the spirit, from the recesses of the body, shall start to a new condition of being, no anxiety, no painful forethought; but it was all peace, deep, assured, unembarrassed peace. Brethren, blessed and holy are they that have this. "I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

Dear Christian brethren, then, suffer the word of exhortation. Let this almost sudden falling asleep in Jesus be to you for a solemn admonition! You have had a loss; yet she, "being dead, yet speaketh," and having left you an example, "follow her, as she followed Christ." Dear brethren, be prepared. Neither you, nor her dearest and nearest friends anticipated, at our last seeing her, her so sudden, so speedy removal. "Be ye, therefore, also ready; for in such an hour as you think not," I doubt not but even to you the Son of Man will come. And what! even now we believe, by some one here the realities of the sick chamber, the decay of their earthly tabernacle, the throes, lastly, of expiring nature, will ere long be experienced; when that body you are now present in will be laid aside, your eyes be sightless, your spirit gone. So that you, now the support, delight, or, it may be, the anxiety of your friends, will soon be laid beneath the quiet ground, while your soul has winged her flight to the worlds away, to hear her final destiny from God and the Lamb. Brethren, what is your state? Let conscience answer whether these events interest and profit you. Do you look upon them as urgent messages from Heaven to live in earnest, above the world, to Christ and God? If so, thoughts of heaven will be more frequent, more fervent; your conduct on earth will be more exemplary, more Christian; God your Father you will more pray to, Christ your Saviour you will more love. You will more lay bare your hearts, your souls, to the influences and graces of the Holy Ghost. And in the great day of account you shall then be accepted and approved. When all earthly temples have for ever passed away, and earthly suns cease their shining, and there is no longer needed the light of the moon; when there shall be no more death, no more sorrow, you in Jehovah and the Lamb as your temple, with Him for your Light, seeing Him face to face, overarched, surrounded, and undergirt with His presence, shall, in Jerusalem above, sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb. "And one of the angels answered, saying unto me, Who are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence come they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God. And the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Wherefore, my dearly beloved, "be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

# THE GOSPEL NOT BELIEVED.

## A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. JAMES PARSONS.

PREACHED IN THE NEW CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, MIDDLETON ROAD, DALSTON,  
ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, AUGUST 25, 1847.

On occasion of the Opening of the Church.

*"That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?"—John xii. 38.*

THIS saying of Esaias the prophet is recorded at the commencement of the fifty-third chapter of the Book which bears His name, and it doubtless had immediate reference to the messages he had personally delivered, in behalf of God, to that generation of the Jewish people with whom he was a contemporary; but from the application which is here made of it, it appears equally plain, that he spoke in his familiar character of a prophet, and in anticipation set forth the treatment which should "in the fulness of time" be received by the Messiah, when He appeared to make the last announcement of the Divine will, in regard to the Jewish people, and also in reference to the whole world. "Then said Jesus unto the Jews," adverting to His own ministry, "yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them. But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which He spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" A similar application is also made by the apostle of the Gentiles, in regard to the labours of himself and his companions in the Christian ministry; for he says—"How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?"

The language, my brethren, which is thus impressively associated with the age when the Gospel was introduced, may legitimately be directed to the subsequent ages of its history; and our own age permits it as fully and as forcibly as any which have yet transpired. On that age, then, and on our own sphere, it is now our intention to concentrate our regard; and the passage we have read will furnish us with material for thought and practical improvement, identified at once with the highest objects of our religion, and with the highest interests of our own immortal souls.

We observe, that the Gospel is a message or report to man, in matters of supreme importance; that it has been communicated to man for the express purpose of being believed; and that it becomes frequently a matter of solemn inquiry, as to the number of those by whom the Gospel has been embraced. The enunciation of these topics will be felt at once appropriate to the season which dedicates this edifice to the service and to the glory of the Redeemer; and it is our prayerful desire, that now they may come "with power, with the Holy Ghost, and with much assurance," and that now tokens and pledges may be given of many triumphs to be achieved, and of many trophies to be won in this place, in years which are to come, and in generations which are yet unborn.

I. We observe, in the first place, that the Gospel is a message or report to man, upon matters of supreme importance.

A system, my brethren, introduced by such agency as that of the Son of God, could not be secondary or insignificant in its contents and its designs. Those designs and those contents are unparalleled and unapproachable in their grandeur. These epithets will be amply justified by such observations as the following.

1. The Gospel is a message or report as to the character and claims of God.

One main purpose of it is to contradict or destroy the false notions respecting God, which by reason of our depravity are suffered to prevail, and to inculcate and establish instead those principles respecting Him which are integrally right and true. It was, therefore, the explanation given by the apostle, as to

the grand object of Him by whom the Gospel was introduced—"No man hath seen God at any time, but the only begotten Son who dwelleth in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." And that was the end to which the whole of His course was strictly and beautifully subservient. If you examine that course, brethren, for yourselves, you will perceive at once how God is declared—in the inviolable majesty of His nature, in the perfect harmony of His attributes, and in the import and bearing of all the relations which He sustains to the universe, as its Creator, its Governor, its Benefactor, and its Judge. There is no legitimate inquiry, respecting these, to which the Gospel does not return an ample and an adequate reply.

2. Again: the Gospel is a message or report as to the character and the condition of mankind.

Human nature is here displayed, accurately and precisely, as "face answereth to face" in a glass. Every being, of every age and every nation, who can rightly discern and candidly acknowledge, when this mirror of the testimony is held up before him will recognise his own features, and must confess it is himself.

Besides statements regarding the physical prospects and properties of our race, here is declared our indwelling depravity of heart, by reason of the primal fall in paradise; here is declared our alienation from God—our being fenced in practical rebellion against His authority and His law; and here is declared our imminent exposure to the curse, which He has righteously threatened against disobedience, and which if inflicted will be found to pour out upon the transgressor the everlasting and irremediable torments of hell. All the chambers of imagery are opened; their recesses are exposed, and their innermost secrets are laid bare.

My brethren, beyond the announcements regarding your species, in the word of the truth of the Gospel, you want nothing. You want not the profound and elaborate dissertations of the philosopher, and you want not the close analysis of the careful and acute observer; here are the principles of true philosophy, and here are the results of untiring observation; and it becomes you to remember, that if you derive not your views of human nature from this one source, you must by necessity become the victims of falsehoods and delusions, which will at once pervert your deportment towards others, and at the same time defraud you of your own redemption, and rob you of your own eternal happiness.

3. Again: we observe, that the Gospel is a message or report as to the method of salvation by the intervention of a Mediator.

This is the grand object for which the Gospel was originally designed; as it is declared to be "the Word of salvation," "the power of God unto salvation," "the Gospel of salvation," and "the great salvation."

Now the statements which are presented to us in this message or report regarding the method of salvation, might justify upon many occasions a prolonged meditation. At the present season, however, they must pass before you in a brief and rapid summary.

The Gospel informs us, that in foresight of human ruin the design of redemption was formed from eternity in the councils of the Triune Godhead. It informs us, that the immediate Author of salvation is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, to whom in the councils of eternity was assigned the office of a Mediator, and who because He unites in His own Person the Divine and the human nature is "mighty to save," and "able to save to the uttermost." It informs us, that the act by which salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ was meritoriously secured, was His death in His human nature upon the cross of Calvary, as an expiatory sacrifice ~~in~~ <sup>on</sup> sin; for the record is, that He "was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities," that "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him," and that "by His stripes we are healed;" that He "bore our sins in His own body on the tree;" that He was ~~made~~ <sup>made</sup> a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree;" and that "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." It informs us that the sufficiency of the sacrifice offered upon Calvary is immeasurable and infinite, and that it founds a mediatorial government, under the sway of Him who presented it, as the reward and recompense of His sufferings, which is finally to subdue all nations beneath the sceptre of mediatorial grace. "This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool." It informs us, that the men who receive an interest in the sacrifice of the cross, are forthwith relieved from all the evil, which now impend over their condition or their future prospects, and that they are finally, after a process of refinement, elevation, and enjoyment upon earth, to be introduced into

regions where, in the Divine presence, they are to inherit joy and gladness, being ineffably and imperishably blessed.

Such, my brethren, are briefly the announcements of the Gospel upon the subjects of salvation—announcements which are to form the grand themes of the sanctuary now dedicated to the honour and to the service of the Redeemer. Glorious tidings are they to an apostate and a perishing world ! They are precious beyond the power of language to describe, and beyond the power of imagination to conceive ; and the splendid immortality of heaven itself will only be occupied in rendering to them their merited homage and praise.

II. Thus illustrating the fact that the Gospel is a message or report to man, in matters of supreme importance, comprising the character and the claims of God, the character and condition of mankind, and the method of salvation through the intervention of a Mediator, we proceed to observe, secondly, that the Gospel is communicated to man for the express purpose of being believed.

Our text indicates this by the very nature of the inquiry—"Who hath believed our report ?" And we imagine there are few present who are not at once, by their own study of Divine truth, reminded of multitudes of statements, from which it appears that faith, a cordial and implicit belief of the truth which the Gospel presents, is to be regarded as one grand and prominent demand. Assuming this, we will proceed to observe—

1. That the report of the Gospel is worthy of faith, on account of the evidence by which it is confirmed.

You are, my brethren, in no instance summoned to exercise faith in the Gospel apart from evidence abundantly sufficient to satisfy the understanding that it really is what it professes to be—that it is not an imposture—that it is not any finite invention of industrious skill or benevolence—but that it is the Word of the truth of the living and only God. We cannot now, of course, enter at large upon the theme which is before us ; we can but remind you of the regular series of historical testimony, as to the legitimacy and authenticity of the Gospel records—of the fulfilment of prophecy, of the performing of miracles, of the wonderful adaptation of the Gospel to the circumstances of man, in all nations and in all ages, and the wonderful achievements it has already accomplished in the social and moral world. These, we say, constitute a conclusive and a triumphant claim, in behalf of the Gospel, to the cordial and humble embrace of every enlightened mind. Scoffers, impugners, and infidels indeed there are ; and it is a fearful manifestation of the reckless impiety of human depravity, that thus it can treat a religion stamped with the last seal which infinite power and wisdom could grant. "Come not you," my brethren, "into their secret ; unto their assembly be not you united ;" and ever remember, that it is the very best and the very noblest exercise of your immortal reason, when on the ground of Christian evidence you confess the divinity of the Christian system, and surrender to it your faculties, your souls, and your all. I pray to God for you, that each one may be conducted to this delightful conclusion, and that in the plenitude of your conviction you may each gratefully resolve and exclaim—

"Hence and for ever from my heart,  
I bid my doubts and fears depart,  
And to those hands my soul resign  
Which bear credentials so Divine."

2. Again : you must observe, that faith in the report of the Gospel is the only medium by which it can be rendered available to our safety and final happiness.

If there be any one in this assembly who has adopted the childish dogma—

"For modes of faith let graceless bigots fight ;  
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right,"

and imagines that the exercise of faith in the Gospel is a matter of indifference, we can only pronounce that you are deeply and dangerously mistaken, and tell you that the exercise of faith is identified with all the highest interests of your souls.

Observe, my brethren, (and we desire to use much simplicity upon this important occasion—for some perhaps there are to whom the testimony of the truth has not oftentimes been presented,)—observe the statements which are made in the Gospel respecting the connection between faith and justification ; justification being an absolution of the sinner from the charge of guilt, and his acceptance before the tribunal of the Judge. "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins ; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." "The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and



upon all them that believe, for there is no difference." "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God."

Observe, again, the statements which are made in the Gospel respecting the connection between faith and sanctification; sanctification being the purifying of the soul from the pollution and the power of sin, and its moral approximation to the character and the image of God. "God hath put no difference between them, and is purifying their hearts by faith." "I send thee to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of their sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith which is in Me." "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Observe, again, the statements which are made in the Gospel respecting the connection between faith and salvation, which is the glorious consummation of justification and sanctification. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." "He that believeth shall be saved." "Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "The word of faith which we preach is this, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Now, my brethren, observe, and carefully recognize and remember this language: the connection between faith and justification, between faith and sanctification, and between faith and salvation. Do you wonder that we, in the exercise of the Christian ministry among you, should insist so frequently upon the necessity of faith? Do you wonder that we should so frequently reiterate and endeavour personally to apply to each one—"Hast thou faith? Hast thou belief in the Son of God?" Do you wonder that we should so frequently exhibit the destinies of futurity, as suspended upon the presence or the absence of this one principle: heaven, with its glories, on the one hand—or hell, with its torments and its agonies, on the other? Should we be faithful in the performance of our duty to your immortal spirits, were we obscure, or indefinite, or fitful, or uncertain? Rather, should we not be exposing ourselves as marks for the thunderbolt? Rather, should we not court upon ourselves the spell of that tremendous aspiration, whose high and awful ambition aspires even to scathe a seraph's pinion, and to strike the thunder-scar upon an angel's brow: "If we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel to you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed." And "a curse causeless shall not come."

3. Again: we are to remind you, that faith in the Gospel results from the operation of Divine power upon the soul.

This is expressed by the latter part of the inquiry, from the words of the prophet, "To whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" "The arm of the Lord" signifies the power of the Lord; and the revelation or manifestation of "the arm of the Lord" consists in the implantation of the sacred principle of faith. It is, my brethren, an affecting thought, that the depraved incredulity of the human heart concerning the testimony of redeeming truth is so obstinate and so inveterate, that it defies and sets at nought and scorns all agencies whatever, except an agency which is Omnipotent and Divine. It is matter for fervent and devout gratitude to God, that in the Christian economy that agency has been abundantly and amply supplied. It is the agency of the Third Person in the Trinity; and the mediatorial work of the Saviour is so arranged that this agency shall be pre-eminently and delightfully secured. His death upon the cross gained for Him the economical command of the influence of the Divine Spirit; and His resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, and His sitting at the right hand of the Father, in His priestly and His regal offices, were for the purpose of securing the mission and operation of the Spirit, till the end and consummation of all things.

This dependence economically of the influences of the Spirit upon the mediatorship of the Son, is several times beautifully indicated in the Gospel which is before us. As upon one occasion, for example, we read: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If, any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" And afterwards, when He was addressing His last discourse to His apostles, previous to His crucifixion, He speaks of "the Comforter, the Holy Ghost," whom the Father should send in His name. He says—"When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father,"—not in His essential existence, but in His economical operation—"He shall testify of Me." Again: "I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment." "He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you." His operations commenced, as you are aware, according to promise, on the wondrous day of Pentecost; and from that memorable era the Divine Spirit has wrought to apply the work of the Saviour, and through the instrumentality of faith to save the souls of endangered and hell-deserving men.

Brethren, we must never compromise nor conceal the one principle which is here distinctly brought before you; and in all that pertains to the progress of genuine religion and to the triumphs of the cross we must remember, that the Divine Spirit is now the one and exclusive engine, by which every advancement is to be secured, and by which every triumph is to be gained.

Yes, brethren, and let us recognise it this morning, in devoting this sanctuary to the service of "the truth as it is in Jesus," that the Divine Spirit is thus to be regarded and honoured by us all. There is not one wrong to be redressed, but by Him; there is not one pollution to be purified, but by Him; there is not one disorder to be corrected, but by Him; there is not one grace to be implanted, but by Him; there is not one hope to be inspired, but by Him; there is not one boon to be imparted, but by Him. It must be—

"Him first, Him last, Him midst, and without end."

If you have believed, and if through faith you have been justified and sanctified, and are expecting to be glorified, you will come to the altar, and present yourselves there only as hell-deserving sinners, and upon that altar present the sacrifice of your all, to glorify Him. "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto Thy name be the glory."

And, my hearers, who are yet strangers to the power of the Gospel upon your hearts, let me remind you of the stern, unalterable, inevitable necessity of that influence of which we have spoken; for, says the master Teacher, (and who shall gainsay Him?)—"Except a man be born of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I say unto you, ye must be born again." And if you be not born again, remember that sin will hold you in its thralldom, till hell receives you to its doom.

III. And now, having illustrated this statement, that the Gospel is communicated to man for the express purpose of being believed, by remarking, that this report is worthy of faith on account of the evidence by which it is accompanied, that faith is the only medium by which it can be rendered available to our safety and eternal happiness, and that faith must be produced by the operations of Divine power upon the soul,—observe, thirdly, that it frequently becomes a matter of solemn inquiry as to the number of those by whom the Gospel has been embraced. The saying of Esaias was—"Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

There are circumstances and modes, in connection with which this inquiry might be suggested, perfectly unauthorised, and meriting only severe and solemn reprehension. For instance, when it is presented by ungodly men, only for the purpose of gratifying an appetite for curiosity, or for sustaining the dogmas of infidelity. It will be observed, however, that the persons by whom the inquiry should be properly pondered and suggested are those who are engaged in the exercise of the Christian ministry. "Who hath believed our report?"—the report which we are accustomed to declare and to enforce. And other persons, doubtless, must in the same spirit combine and unite with them,—those who themselves are believers in the truth, who sympathise

much with the anxieties and the labours of those to whom the ministry of the Gospel is committed, who would comfort them amidst their depressions and rejoice amidst their successes and their triumphs; and oftentimes, in various ages, the inquiry must also be solemnly pondered by them—"Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

Let us here notice, the implication which the inquiry involves; and the results which that implication ought to secure.

1. Observe the implication which this inquiry involves.

The implication, dear brethren, is, that there are but few persons comparatively, to whom the testimony of the Gospel is presented, who cordially and truly embrace it.

This implication was plainly truthful and correct, in connection with the ministry of the prophet himself, in his own age; and he is represented as exclaiming—"I have laboured in vain, and I have spent my strength for nought." He is represented, again, as stating his success to be found when he least expected it: "I was sought of them that I asked not for." And then with regard to others, when success was anticipated, he says mournfully—"All the day long have I stretched forth my hand to a disobedient and gain-saying people."

The same implication was correct, in regard to the ministry of the Lord Jesus himself, who was not what in common terms would be designated a successful minister of the truth. He "bore the contradiction of sinners against Himself;" and we read in the passage from which our text is taken—"Though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled."

The same implication was also correct in regard to the apostles; for though oftentimes they were gladdened by victories, and were enabled to indulge in emotions of ecstasy, in watching the progress of their religion from land to land and from continent to continent, yet oftentimes in deep sorrow of heart they had to look for refuge to higher sources, while lamenting that their ministry came "in word only, and not in power," and that it was almost useless even to the last.

And we know, my brethren, that the history of Christians has been an exemplification of the same fact. With regard to the age in which we live, what minister of the Gospel is there in our kingdom, who has not oftentimes said in spirit, whilst from his lips has arisen the inquiry—"Who hath believed our report?" We are not insensible to the tokens of kindness which have been vouchsafed to us in the mercy of our Divine Redeemer. We know that in the last age there has been an advance in religion of no insignificant order, and when we look at the climes which are beyond us, and witness the movement which is occurring in the human mind in various empires—the casting off of systems of imposture, and the becoming disposed to the embracing of that system which is the alone correct and true and saving,—here is reason for thankfulness and for praise. And yet, brethren, what a solemn, and almost tragical converse is before us! Look at the masses of the converts; and after all, "what are these among so many?" What is the proportion borne by those who are emancipated, to those who yet remain in spiritual thralldom? What is the proportion borne by those who have been enlightened, to those who yet remain in darkness and in the shadow of death? What is the proportion borne by those who have been "plucked as brands from the burning," to those who seem even yet heaped (as it were) on the very verge and margin of the flame? We seem to stand on an eminence; and we survey from that eminence the dry bones which lie bleaching in the valley of vision; and if here and there, as we gaze, there start up a solitary being, clothed with sinews and animated with life, and moving about in new-formed liberty and in new-created privilege, there is still a vast multitude, concerning whom we are compelled to present the sad and solemn account—"Behold the bones are very many; and lo! they are very dry." Is there one, dear brethren, who from these brief hints enters not deeply into the truth and spirit of the statement? And how shall we contemplate it, but with the deepest searching of heart?

2. This being the nature of the implication, you must also observe the results which from that implication must be produced.

And, my brethren, contemplating the fact before us, compassion must be produced. We speak much of the guilt of man, (and guilt against God is a horrible thing—it must encounter stern reproof, and receive severe condemnation,)—but who that has himself been guilty, and from guilt has been redeemed, does not deeply and tenderly compassionate those who are yet in danger and in death? Oh! brethren, could you understand the actual

position in the sight of God, and of necessity, of one yet in unbelief and sin, and trace his progress onwards to the sad and inexorable consummation—what would be the overwhelming tenderness and brokenness of your heart for guilty men? Could you see for a moment a soul that is lost—could this vacant area be for a season filled by one mysterious visitant from the world of ruin—could you see that brow, marked with the thunder scar of the Eternal, and that eye, glaring with the dreadful immortality of hell, and that heart, gnawed by “the worm that dieth not,” or lighted up by the scorching fire that is never quenched—and could that tongue, in sepulchral tone, “tell the secrets of its prison-house,” and expound to you what it is to be lost,—how would you shrink back in horror, and perhaps rush away from the sanctuary, desiring some leakage from the waters of oblivion, to banish the remembrance of that vision for ever!

Brethren, the vision comes not, and cannot come. But estimate, from this drawing, what is the state of a soul that is departed in unbelief and sin. Hear of the “destruction from the presence of God, and from the glory of His power;” hear of “the blackness of darkness;” hear of “the fire that is unquenchable, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Then ponder upon the immense multitudes, who by reason of unbelief are exposed to these horrors of final destiny: some of them, peradventure, here; others, amidst your own households; multitudes in your city, throughout your country, and throughout the world; until the procession of hundreds of millions thus passes before you. And what now is your compassion for them? Brethren, the man that feels not here—the man that mourns not here—the man that strains not every nerve and employs not every faculty here—has not one notion but what humanity must blush to own, and even corruption itself refuse and disdain to record, excepting in the very blackest catalogue of its crimes.

Again: exertion must be produced. The report which we have delivered we must continue to proclaim; and under the consciousness of our own obligation, and observing the vast multitudes around us, who are yet in sin and in imminent peril, must we not, brethren, be untiring and incessant, in the announcement of the truth whereby men may be saved? We who are engaged in the work of the Christian ministry have indeed an awful, and almost overpowering obligation upon ourselves; and I may, as a minister, for myself and for others, remind you that we must feel the importance of faithful exhortation, disclosing in clear and emphatic terms “the whole counsel of God,”—earnest exhortation, manifesting an intense anxiety of spirit, in some measure commensurate with the matters for which we plead—and incessant exhortation, knowing no termination and no rest, while reason holds its seat, while the head can think, while the tongue can speak, and while the life shall last. And we, brethren, must indeed, especially in these ominous and important times, nerve ourselves anew to the work of exhortation to which we have been summoned, listening to the words of the apostle, when he speaks of preaching the Gospel as a matter of necessity: “For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

And, my Christian brethren and sisters, remember the obligation of faithful, and intense, and incessant exhortation lies also upon all and upon each of you; and if you lose your opportunity and sacrifice your influence in the world, when opportunity might be employed and influence might be exerted in the church, and for Christ, and for souls, take heed how you answer for the deficiency, when blood shall be required at your hands. Let us continue fasted, unmoved, always abounding in the work of the Lord; and if sometimes tempters come to us, endeavouring to seduce us to other, and it may be, more plausible themes, let us answer them as did the dignified Nehemiah, when he stood upon the ramparts of the ancient city—“I am about a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease, while I leave it and come down to you?” Saved ourselves, the salvation of others must be to us our all.

And then, finally, prayer should be produced. The influence of the Divine Spirit, to whom we have adverted, is to be sought and is to be obtained by prayer. “There shall be showers of blessings,” saith the Father; but the Father adds—“For all these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them, saith the Lord.” And prayer, earnest, and constant, must

ascend from the churches of Christ for the outpouring of the Divine Spirit. We have been taught, brethren in the ministry, that prayer and the announcement of the truth are indissolubly interwoven with each other. "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." The saints are to help together in this behalf. They are to "pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may have free course, and run, and be glorified." What we want, brethren, is a spirit of prayer. We have been languid, when we ought to have been earnest; we have been contracted, when we ought to have been comprehensive; we have been fitful, when we ought to have been incessant; we have been cold, when we ought to have been inspired. We must arise and shake off the lethargy which has oppressed us, and besiege the throne of God with all the power of prayer, standing as in the presence of the Shekinah, and there exclaiming—"God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us. That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations." "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord, put on strength, as in ancient times and in generations of old." And as thus we stand and wrestle, in God's own sublime language, which would have been presumptuous had He not authorised us, let us lay hold upon His strength, as if grasping the very sinews of Omnipotence. Then the ministry will be more successful; then the churches will be purified; then sinners will be converted; then believers will be edified; then error will be rebuked; then pollution will be cleansed; then impostures and systems of superstition will melt and wither and die; then the cross, the banner of triumph, will be planted high upon the eminences of all nations; then will come the last age of mercy, when the Spirit being "poured out upon all flesh," all things shall be created anew; then He by whom shall be accomplished the work for which we pant and groan, will look down with infinite complacency upon the last and most wondrous achievement of His grace, and as over the old creation will pronounce it "very good;" then "the morning stars will sing together, and all the sons of God" will shout aloud for joy; and the hallelujahs of heaven will be sounded in ecstasy over a reclaimed and a happy world.

In the illustration we have been enabled to make of this important statement of Holy Writ, we trust that what has been presented may be deemed, in its elements at least, sufficient to show to you the truth which shall hereafter be proclaimed within these walls. But another grand object of this service, besides a public exposition of evangelical principles, is that all those present who have not yet been led to the exercise of faith—who have not yet believed the report of the Gospel—may be induced to believe it now; and happy will it be, if this first service, in this house of prayer and praise, be consecrated by the turning of some from sin to repentance, and from infidelity to faith: My fellow-sinners, it is our work to denounce on you; and we do it not in sternness and in severity—but with mournfulness and tenderness of heart we denounce on you, that if you believe not this truth you will surely perish. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the Son of God." "He that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." "He that believeth not shall be damned." And if, my hearers, from these scenes of privilege you die in your sins, and thus enter into a retributive eternity, you will know by your own history what it is to be a lost soul. *Your soul will be lost!* And is there one who can brave the worst,—the "sorer punishment," the "many stripes," the innermost depths and mysteries of that terrible secret, that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?" Oh! brethren, commit not the suicide of the soul! He who wills sin, (and all sin is strictly voluntary and wilful)—he who wills sin, and lives and dies in sin, is a self-murderer—the suicide of his own soul! We implore you, in the name of our Master, to turn and believe that "we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God." Accept the invitation which is freely given from the cross, and come that you may have life. Then, when you have believed, the curse will disappear, the shadows will be dispelled, the dawn of day will appear upon your horizon, and nought but happiness and blessedness will appear before you; then, our privilege will be yours, our acceptance will be yours, our purification will be yours, our adoption into the Divine family will be yours, our victory over death and Satan will be yours, our welcome in the judgment will be yours, our enjoyments of the realms of bliss will be yours. Then we shall all be saved; and then ours will be the everlasting anthem of heaven—"Salvation be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever." It is our prayer to God for you all, that without exception you may be saved. Believe the truth of the Gospel, and salvation already is begun.

## THE CHRISTIAN DESIRING ESTABLISHMENT.

### A Harvest Thanksgiving Sermon,

BY THE

HON. AND REV. BAPTIST W. NOEL, M.A.

PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, BEDFORD ROW,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 17, 1847.

Being the Day appointed for a General Thanksgiving for the late abundant Harvest.

*"For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established."*—Romans i. 11.

BEING permitted again, after some weeks of absence, to minister among you, my dear brethren, I have chosen this passage, not only because it expresses my feelings, but likewise because it directs our attention to a point which may be of service to us all.

The apostle, who had never seen the church at Rome, was long anxious to have an opportunity of visiting them, and wished to seize the first occasion of passing from Asia—or rather from those parts of Europe to which he afterwards had access—still further, to the coasts of Italy, and to be of advantage to these Christians at Rome. "I long," he says, "to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established."

Much of the instruction which the Word of God conveys to us, is given in the form of example; and we may learn scarcely less from the statements which the apostle makes of his own feelings, than from the direct precepts which he was authorised by Christ to convey to the churches. As an apostle of Christ he has here shown us the great desire which he had to visit this company of Christians at Rome. "I long," he says, "to see you." There is no feature more to be remarked in the life of the apostle Paul, than the heart which he threw into all his ministerial acts. He desired heaven, and therefore laboured for it; he loved Christ, and therefore laboured for Him; and he loved his fellow-Christians, wherever they might be, and therefore was willing to "spend and be spent for them." Thus his whole ministry was a delight to him, because his heart was engaged in it; and though prolonged through years, he still felt an undecaying satisfaction in the fulfilment of the ministry assigned to him by the Lord. It is when religion ceases to be an affair of calculation or of habit—when it is not even the result merely of an awakened conscience, but when our hearts are diligently and earnestly engaged in all its exercises—that we prosper in the Divine life, and our religion is genuine.

He tells us here further the reason why he wished to see these Christians. "That I may impart unto you," he adds, "some spiritual gift." Now these words are generally employed by the apostle, in his writings, respecting those supernatural communications of the Spirit, which as an apostle he was commissioned and enabled to bestow: such as the gift of languages, or the gift of healing. But although this is the usual employment of the words, they do not exclude those higher gifts which are not extraordinary, and without which the others in reality would have been in vain. What the apostle, therefore, desired was, that, by his visit to them as an apostle of Christ, they might obtain the blessing of the Spirit of God, whether by the communication of His ordinary or extraordinary gifts. "That I

may impart unto you some spiritual gift." Even if we were to limit the meaning to these miraculous gifts which the apostles were enabled to bestow, still this gift was not to be looked upon as the end he had in view, but simply as a mean: "for," he says—"I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established." Therefore their establishment in faith—their being strengthened in piety—was the end which he had in view, when he "desired to impart to them some spiritual gift." This, in the lowest view we take of the supposed benefit, would be the result. When, for instance, the people of Samaria were brought to an acknowledgment of the truth, and were baptized as believers, we read, in the eighth of Acts, that the apostles Peter and John were summoned from Jerusalem and visited that infant church at Samaria for this express purpose—that they might receive these miraculous communications of the Spirit of God, which were communicated by the apostles, perhaps ordinarily and exclusively, by the imposition of their hands. When these apostles were come to Samaria, they prayed for these newly-converted men, and then laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. The effect of such a communication must have been greatly to strengthen the faith of those who had believed. If without witnessing miracles they had been led, by the means which had been employed and by the accompanying gift of the Spirit of God, to become the disciples of Jesus Christ—when they witnessed the miracles, which the apostles of Christ were not only able to work themselves, but could give to others the power of working, then they must have felt distinctly that Jesus was the Son of God, and that His religion was Divine. In the same manner, if the apostle Paul should visit these Christians at Rome, who had been brought to the knowledge of the truth by other men, then, communicating to them spiritual gifts, as apostles of Christ, their faith would be established. But still more, if he was the means, by his preaching and by his example, of leading them more to love the Redeemer, would they be established in the religion which they had already professed.

Now this was the apostle's aim; and in setting before us the reason for his desire to visit the Christians at Rome, he has taught us what ought to be the aim of the ordinary ministry, and what ought to be our desire in this congregation. There is, indeed, a vast difference between the apostle and any ordinary minister of Christ—a difference partly in the supernatural gifts which Christ had bestowed upon him, and partly in the superior grace to which he had attained; yet still let us recollect, that the ministry has been appointed by Christ. He has called some of His servants to labour in this vocation. When we read, in the twentieth chapter of Acts, this address of the apostle Paul to the elders of Ephesus—"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers"—these who were ordinary ministers—we learn from that address that the ministry is of Christ's appointment—that it is the Holy Ghost who calls and who fits men to become the ministers of Christ, the pastors of His churches. And therefore, as I trust that I have been called by Him to be His minister, and you have expressed the same feeling and belief, in choosing me as your minister by worshipping in this place, I may hope that the same blessing which Christ intended His ministers usually to bring to the different churches, over which He placed them as their respective pastors, may descend among us also.

Now it is clear from the Word of God that He has called His ministers to be the means of converting sinners; not the only means—perhaps not the chief means—but still to be an instrument in His hands of converting sinners. "Faith," says the apostle, "cometh by hearing;" and therefore the preaching of His Word was intended to bring sinners to believe. To the Corinthian church, again, the apostle says—"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" So that the ministers whom they listened to at Corinth, were the means of their conversion, by the accompanying power of the Holy Ghost, "even as the Lord gave to every man." And this, which is incidentally mentioned in

these passages, is converted, in the epistle to Timothy, into a distinct promise to each minister who is watching for that end. "Take heed to thyself," says the apostle, "and to the doctrine, for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." So that where ministers of Christ do make this the desire of their hearts, the subject of their prayer and watchfulness, they may look to be the instruments, in the hands of the Lord himself, of bringing those that were perishing, to receive salvation, present happiness, and eternal life, at the hands of a gracious God. As God has provided a rich, free and full salvation for the guilty, the ignorant and the helpless, and calls a wicked world to receive that salvation, so He has bidden His ministers to set that salvation, by their preaching and by their lives, before careless and ignorant sinners, that they may receive the message of mercy and love.

But this is not the only object for which Christ has appointed some of His servants to minister stately in His name: the apostle Paul sets before us the further intention of the call of Christ to some persons to be His ministers, in the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, where he uses these words: "He," (the ascended Saviour,) "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The "apostles and prophets" have wrought their work; they have accomplished the intention for which they were raised up by the power of God; and now there remain "evangelists, pastors and teachers," for the accomplishment of that work which is equally to be accomplished and is equally necessary in each successive age of mankind. These are "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." And therefore, if the apostle Paul desired that he might visit the Christians at Rome, to the end that they might "be established," so every minister of Christ, who is become the pastor of any church of Christ, is allowed to hope, that he may be the means likewise of edifying that portion of the Christian community, and of leading those believers in Jesus to further establishment.

We therefore, my brethren, see, however great the disparity between an apostle of Christ and one of His ordinary ministers, that it is not presumption in any minister of Christ who is desirous to accomplish His will, to hope to establish in their faith those among whom he ministers.

In this view let me offer you some simple remarks on these two points, to which this passage directs our attention.

In the first place, it shows that the object which we all should have in view is, that we may be established. Here was a Christian community—many of them, perhaps, eminent for their religious attainments: the apostle's wish in visiting them was, that they should be established. It should, therefore, be our wish, that we may be established. The general necessity of such a blessing, is manifest by the most cursory attention to the familiar language of the New Testament respecting it.

We are called, my brethren, by our Saviour, to "be perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect;" and which of us does not now feel that we are far from such an attainment? The apostle Paul, again, in speaking to the Ephesians, bids us to be "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might"—not to remain weak Christians, but to obtain spiritual strength. When we read the epistle to the Philippians, we find ourselves urged in that epistle to become "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke"—without reproach—whom no man can reproach—"in the midst of an evil and perverse world," among whom we are summoned to "shine as lights." And again, we find the apostle Peter urging us, when he urged the churches of Asia Minor, to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour." Passages like these give us a general idea of what is intended by the establishment spoken of in our text.

We are called to be established in knowledge. It is possible for those who recognize the general doctrines of the Gospel, to remain without that comprehensive, experimental, and heart-affecting view of the Gospel, which it is so



desirable for each of us to obtain. This kind of knowledge the apostle Paul, in his second epistle to the Colossians, terms "the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." When we attain a "full assurance of understanding," comprehend the Gospel of Christ so completely that we see its adaptation to all our wants, it becomes its own evidence, it gives us a perfect assurance that it is from God; doubt vanishes, the heart and the mind are both at rest, and the Christian is then able, without a shadow of doubt upon his spirit, to acknowledge the great truth "of God and of the Father and of Christ;" to see in it one revealed God the Father, and His eternal Son Jesus our Saviour, incarnate to accomplish our redemption, and by the Spirit of God to make us holy and happy in time and eternity. This the apostle terms being established.

He speaks, in the same epistle, of the Christians at Colosse "continuing in the faith, grounded and settled." To be established in the faith depends upon this "full assurance of understanding," this experimental acquaintance with the Gospel of Christ, this knowledge of it, taught not by reflection merely, but by God himself; and those are "settled and grounded in the faith," whom God himself thus teaches. The text before us leads us earnestly to desire, that we may thus ourselves be "established in the faith;" that we may not sometimes feel that we can welcome the Gospel, but welcome it day by day—not sometimes feel that we have a doubt or hesitation respecting it, but day by day rejoice in those truths which we have ascertained—day by day be able to say, "Christ is our Saviour, and God our Father, and heaven our home;" and thus to be "grounded and settled in the faith;" not moved from the hope which we have welcomed—not sometimes letting it go, and seeming to be tossed about in an ocean of doubt and misery, but still steadily steering towards our everlasting home, and seeing its glorious prospect brightening upon our view as we advance.

Further: if "grounded and settled in the faith," we are called by the apostle Paul to be established in holiness, as you may see in the third chapter of the first epistle to the Thessalonians, where he makes this prayer for them—"The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints:" in other words, that He might make them holy; unblamable in holiness, completely holy, and preserve them in this state till the day when they shall stand before the judgment-seat of a returning Saviour. Our text, then, leads us to wish, that we should thus be established in holiness, that we should get a fixed abhorrence of evil—not as the result merely of meditation or prayer, for one happy hour feel that we should wish to be conformed to God, and be afraid of sin, and dread temptation—but a habit, day by day, and throughout the day, wherever we may be, and in whatever we may engage, still to have this established holiness, the hatred of evil and the love of good for its own sake—the love of whatever is conformed to the will of God, a delight in the purity of God himself, and a wish to be like God, and like those holy beings who minister to Him perpetually.

As a result of this progress in holiness, which is so essential to the Christian character—the hatred of sin and the love of goodness—the apostle calls us, in another passage, to be established in all those external habits which flow from it: for thus he prayed for the same Thessalonian church—"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work." The holiness of the Christian's heart must be manifest in his conversation and his daily habits of conduct; and our text therefore calls us to be "established in every good word and work," as we are established in holiness—that all the conversation which becomes Christians, and all the conduct which our fellow-Christians may fairly expect from us, may be manifested in us day by day—that we may not be inconsistent, sometimes speaking and acting as though we were not the disciples of Christ, and at others as though it were by some difficult

effort, for a few hours or a few days acting consistently—but continually to be “established in every good word and work,” according to the Gospel rule and through the influence of the Spirit of grace.

Now this is set before us, in our text, as our aim—as the end which we ought to have in view for ourselves individually, and which each of us ought to desire to realise,—that we may be established. It is a melancholy thing to remain year after year weak Christians; for those who are weak, have very little enjoyment in the Christian life. They cannot lay hold on the promises of God; they are continually tossed about by various doubts. They fear sometimes for their everlasting condition: and meanwhile they can derive little advantage from the means of grace. They read, they pray, and they hear with little improvement; and this, again, reacts upon their spirits and makes them sad; and then, instead of doing good to their fellow-Christians they do them manifestly harm. If a Christian is inconsistent—if he is saddened by doubt, if he has no joyful anticipation of the presence of his Lord, and of his glory and rest in heaven after his work on earth,—then others are little attracted, by any conversation or any example of his, towards the Gospel which he rather misrepresents; while, on the other hand, those who become established in religion—established in “knowledge,” in “faith,” in “holiness,” and in “every good word and work,” do honour and glorify their Lord, are perpetually doing good in the world, and enjoy that peace of mind, under all possible vicissitudes, which Christ has left to His disciples, and loves to pour into their hearts, and by which they may “walk worthy of their high vocation,” as the adopted children of God and the joyful heirs of glory. Hence it should be our aim. You should seek to be established, and I should seek to be established. We have to become “strong in the Lord;” that we may ultimately become “perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

But next let us notice, from this text, the means which may be employed to further that object.

It is God himself, we should never forget, who, as He is the author of conversion, is also the source of the establishment of His people. The passages I have already cited, and several others, direct our attention mainly to this point. It is God who must establish His people; it is the grace of God that must make the weak believer strong; it is the direct effect of the Spirit of God, that you and I, as a church of Christ, should improve—that we should become more pious, more devoted to His will, increasing in experimental knowledge of His truth, becoming more holy in heart, and more consistent in our life and conversation. It must be His own work—He must do it for us. If we love Him at all, He has given us that love to Him; He has taken away the enmity of our hearts, He has taught us to believe. If we have welcomed the Gospel again and again, it is because He has led us to welcome it, because He removed the enmity of our proud hearts. And if He has laid the foundation of spirituality within us, He must raise the superstructure Himself, until He has made each one a temple worthy of His own dwelling.

But at the same time, in this, as in as many other particulars, the language of the Word of God is perfectly explicit, as to the part which men should take in the same. While, therefore, it is frequently a matter of prayer to the apostle, that the churches might be “established in the faith,” this is no less the subject of repeated exhortations to them. Thus, to mention only one instance—that in the first epistle to the Corinthians—(and there are several others which you will remember)—the apostle says to them—“Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” “Be ye stedfast.” They are not to wait till the blessing is bestowed, as though they had nothing to do—inertly, passively: “be ye stedfast”—“take care that you grow in every consistent Christian habit,” is the language of the apostle to the Corinthians. And therefore it is to be fastened on our minds, as a positive duty to which we are called by God, as well as an immense benefit to be derived from its exercise. That is, while we are using the prescribed means, we may look to Him for His needful blessing; and the grace of God co-operates with the energy and

earnestness to which He brings His people, by which they may grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour.

We are therefore called to read His Word with care ; to pray to Him in secret and in our families ; to watch over our daily habits ; not to run into any known temptation ; to be aware of our own infirmities, and watchful against whatever might increase them ; daily to strengthen every good disposition ; to welcome Christian conversation, wherever we may have it ; to watch and to imitate the highest examples within our reach ; and to use whatever means our circumstances direct us to, for the advancement of religion in our hearts.

And among these means which God has provided, and to which our own experience may direct us, the use of the ministry of the Gospel is one. It is perhaps a less important mean of improvement than it once was, because when Christians did not possess the Scriptures, and the manuscripts of the Word of God were with such difficulty and at such cost multiplied, there were not the separate means of instruction which there now are ; besides which, thank God, the various useful and heart-stirring books of religion in our language are most effective in promoting the spiritual welfare of those who use them aright. And thus each parent, each master, may become a minister of Christ in his own family, may preach Christ to his own household, and to his own heart. Yet still, as ministers have been appointed by Christ to the end, as a separate order from Him, we should be undutiful to Him, to suppose that no benefit may be derived from their instrumentality. If only they are qualified, as He intends—if only they seek from Him the grace which He does not refuse—they likewise may be instrumental in the building up of their fellow-Christians. Our Lord intimated this to us, when He said to His fallen disciple Peter—"When thou art converted"—brought back again from his grievous fall, and once more established in his faith,—“when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” Then, it is obvious, his experience, humility, earnestness, and gratitude might enable him to promote the welfare of those Christians, with whom he associated. And even inferior men might be so employed. In the first epistle to the Thessalonians and the third chapter, the apostle Paul thus speaks of his companion Timothy, whom in the various churches he employed to communicate the information and to impress the habits which he desired : “Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens ; and sent Timotheus, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the Gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith.” The intention, then, for which Timothy was sent to that church at Thessalonica, was that he might establish them. His own personal piety, his large experience of the progress of the Gospel, his acquaintance with its truths, his recollections of the instructions of the apostle Paul, with whom he had long travelled, his earnest charity towards their souls, would enable him, as an instrument in the hand of God, to build them up in faith, in holiness, and in all Christian conduct ; and therefore he was sent by the apostle Paul to visit them. Now that which Timothy might be the means of effecting at Thessalonica, may any minister of Christ, with the blessing of God and by the aid of His Spirit, be the means of effecting likewise, in the people among whom he ministers ; and it does not seem presumptuous, therefore, to desire earnestly from God, that those who minister among you may, in concurrence with other means, be instrumental in establishing you in faith and holiness, and in every good word and work.

Let me, then, my dear brethren, beseech you, while we are entering upon what I may call another ministerial year, after our brief separation—let me beseech you to set this before you, as the end you have in view as a body of Christians. May those who have received the truth, set it before them as one reason why they come to this house of prayer, why they associate with other Christians here, why they consent to place themselves in connexion with me as their minister,—that they may be established in knowledge, in faith, in holiness, and in all Christian conduct. Seek it from God, as directly His gift ; and remember that God can do it, and no one else, and that unless He put

forth His mighty power, at the close of another year you will be as little instructed in the truth, as weak in faith, as deficient in holiness, and as inconsistent in conduct, as at any time of your Christian profession you may regret to have been. There is no growth in grace, there is no strength to be attained, except it be directly God's gift. And if we honour the Spirit of God, as the sole agent by whom it can be accomplished, our God and Father will not refuse it to us.

But then, let me beseech you to remember, that it is God's method to bless His people by summoning all their powers into activity, and by making them as earnest and as assiduous in seeking spiritual blessings, as they are in any temporal pursuit whatever; and if you have any earnestness, any decision, any activity, any promptitude, any courage, in prosecuting any earthly avocation or common business, try the sincerity of your spirits by seeing whether that earnestness, decision, activity, promptitude, perseverance, and courage, are manifest in seeking your spiritual progress daily.

And finally, my brethren, though I cannot enlarge upon this point, let me remind you how often the apostle Paul sought the prayers of his fellow Christians—first, that he might open his mouth boldly, in proclaiming the Gospel, of which he was appointed a minister, and secondly, that “the Word of the Lord,” as preached by him, might have “free course and be glorified.” I entreat you to do for me, as your minister, this benefit too.

First, though the freedom of our happy kingdom, and the progress of light and of law in this land has rendered the boldness of a minister of Christ less needful than it once was—or rather, I should say, the same unveiled, clear, open statement of the Gospel may be made now, without the boldness which was required then,—yet still there are other qualities not less necessary—earnestness, sincerity, sympathy with others, charity for the souls of those that are perishing, delight in the progress of the work of God among Christians, to see His people growing in everything that is praiseworthy and honourable to the Saviour. All this is needed in a minister who would fulfil the work of Christ.

And then, after all, it is not any qualification in the minister, which can secure that progress in the church of Christ; God alone can glorify His Word, and make it the means of converting some, and of building up others in the truth. Pray, therefore, that His Word may be eminently glorified among us. It is my earnest desire, most simply to expound to you the Word of God; it is my earnest wish for you, that you may by your own independent search, become greatly acquainted with the Word of God—that you may have an abundant knowledge of the Word of God, and may be able to sustain every leading opinion that you have, by a direct and unequivocal reference to the meaning of God's Word. I believe that our progress depends very much upon our coming, by these means, to an accurate acquaintance with what God has said to us—so that it may not be by the teaching of man, but by the teaching of God, that the whole of the truths of the Gospel are brought before our minds. And then may we together communicate the knowledge of His will to others, and be the blessed instruments in His hands of making known the Gospel which cheers and sanctifies us.

But while we seek this progress in true religion, which I hope will be set before the minds of all in this congregation who love God, all who are converted by His grace, never failing to make all past attainments the ground of further improvement, then, my brethren, let us not forget how clearly the apostle, in the name of Christ, has commanded us to combine with our supplication for further blessing, our thankfulness for the mercies which are past. “Be careful for nothing,” he says, “but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” “With thanksgiving,” therefore, let us each supplicate for further progress. Let us bless Him, above all, for Christ, for spiritual mercies through Christ, for our acquaintance with the Gospel, for the subjugation of our heart and will, in any measure to God, as “our reasonable service.” And then let us bless Him for every day's mercies—for every temporal blessing, throughout

every day. And on this day let us unite our hearts with so many of our Christian brethren, in thanking Him for the providential favours which He bestows upon this sinful world. Not only has our own country reaped an abundant harvest, but His bountiful hand is manifest all through Europe. In various countries has the earth poured forth its treasures ; though the nations forget Him, though they praise Him not for His mercy, though Christ is disowned, though the great redemption which is provided for sinners is derided, rejected, refused, still our infinitely gracious God has been pouring out upon Europe the blessings of His providence, and again wooing an ungrateful race to love Him and to serve Him ; and therefore let us bless Him for it. And when we think that Italy, and France, and Germany, and Switzerland, are all abundantly provided, together with England and Scotland and Ireland, with these bounties of God's Providence, let us think of Him as the best of all beings, whose infinite loving-kindness and bounty are beyond all praise.

And since we are called this day to praise Him, it is my duty to give you the opportunity of contributing towards the object mentioned in the Royal Letter, though I regret to say, the shortness of the time since my return does not enable me to state on what grounds that request is to be made, what are the peculiar needs to which our attention is summoned, or in what way the money collected is to be applied.

THE CHRISTIAN USES OF NATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL  
CHASTISEMENT.

A Harvest Thanksgiving Sermon,

REV. DANIEL MOORE, M.A.

PREACHED IN CAMDEN CHURCH, CAMBERWELL,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 17, 1847.

Being the Day appointed for a General Thanksgiving for the late abundant Harvest.

*"I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy: for Thou hast considered my trouble; Thou hast known my soul in adversities."*—Psalm xxxi. 7.

WHEN the apostle was preaching his farewell sermon to the church of Ephesus, and while the weeping elders were preparing to kneel down with him on the shore, he entreated them, as the last piece of advice which by word he should ever give to them, to "remember those words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." We are not told on what occasion our blessed Lord gave expression to this sentiment, nor in what way He intended the rule to be applied, but it seems to admit of application in many ways. Whether God or man be regarded as the object of it, all experience and all philosophy will be found to prove the axiom true. Thus, applying the rule to our dealings with our fellow-creatures, "it is more blessed to give than to receive," because, in the very act of giving from a right motive, we do a moral good to ourselves; we weaken the power of the selfish principle within us, and, by emptying ourselves of a few of the poor gifts of earth, we make more room for the heart to receive the choice gifts of Heaven. Whilst, if God be considered as the object of the Saviour's precept, "it is more blessed to give than to receive" mercies; to fill heaven with praises than to fill our garners with all manner of store; to yield back to the universal Parent the thank-offerings of righteousness, than to have our responsibilities increased by having more seed to water and more talents to improve.

Yet, who knows not how greatly we all err herein? We all give in praise far less than we receive in benefits, and are more willing to imitate the fretfulness of Jacob, exclaiming, "All these things are against me," than to discover matter for the grateful language of David, "I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy: for Thou hast considered my trouble; Thou hast known my soul in adversities."

We are not told on what occasion David wrote the psalm from which our text is taken. It was probably written during the period when he was suffering from the persecuting hatred of Saul; and there are some passages in the psalm which would seem to agree well with the circumstances of his deliverance in the wilderness of Maon, when Saul marched up one side of the hill while David was making his way up the other. But to which ever of these hair-breadth escapes the composition be referred, we cannot fail to be struck with that beautiful blending of prayer and praise, of tales of danger and songs of deliverance, of strong temptations and stronger confidence, which will ever make this psalm a model of strong faith in the time of adversity, and lively gratitude in the day of deliverance.

The psalmist begins with a humble hope; he then proceeds with a rejoicing confidence; and he ends with a triumphant assurance that God will strengthen the hearts of all them that hope in His Word.

In the passage which I have read to you, we meet the psalmist in the second stage of which I have spoken, that of spiritual confidence, where, in grateful remembrance of his recent deliverance, he exclaims, "I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy; for Thou hast considered my trouble; Thou hast known my soul in adversities."

Such language has an obvious suitableness to the present occasion. We are called upon to mark this day by a solemn and grateful recognition of God's recent mercies to us in having "considered our souls in adversity," and, in answer to a nation's prayers, having "given and preserved to our use the kindly fruits of the earth." I could, indeed, have wished that the grateful feelings of the nation had been so strongly manifested, that our rulers would not have been content with requiring of us this cheap Sunday gratitude. I would that they had felt that they should be doing but poor justice to our sense of a great mercy, in calling upon us to offer unto God that which costs us nothing, to give unto Him a day which we could not, if we would, give to our pleasures or our gains. Nay, I cannot but hope, even yet, that they do us a great, though unintended, wrong; that, though there be some ingrate spirits in the land who would murmur at what they would consider a day's loss, yet that the real stay of the nation, the "saving health of the nation," the Nehemiahs, and Ezras, and Aarons, who, standing between the living and the dead, avert our nation's plagues, are numerous enough to have justified the government in disregarding the murmurings of Demetrius and his craftsmen, and sanctifying a week day in gratitude to the Lord. Still, in intention, I am sure our rulers have acted rightly, and it should be ours to mark the day by all the distinctness in our power. We are creatures of sense, and we require sensible indications to distinguish one day from another—nay, to make it palpable even to ourselves that we do distinguish. Besides, therefore, the desire to realise, with more than common gratefulness, the presence of Him who hath "considered our souls in adversity," I would advise you to distinguish the day—yourselves and your households—by an observed carefulness to redeem more time than usual for eternity on this day. With regard to your households, it is not easy perhaps to give the day any peculiar marks. Accustomed on every Lord's day to spare your domestics all the trouble you can, you may not be able to do more to-day. Still it is something for you to avow, and for them to see, that you wish to give them all the time to themselves that you possibly can; that you are desirous, where practicable, to allow all your servants the opportunity of a double attendance at the sanctuary; while if to this you could add some special exhortations at your family service, or append thereto the reading of some appropriate tract, or propose a collection of thank-offerings throughout the household, to be given to our own necessitous poor, you would at least show your own mindfulness of a great deliverance, and your wish that your servants should be mindful also. From communion on this day none should be absent who are accustomed in this way to commemorate mercies. If we "bind the sacrifice" to our hearts, we should bind it to "the horns of the altar."

With regard to the immediate occasion of this national act, it is not needful that I should speak at any length. For many months a great portion of our land was the scene of an awful visitation from God. A withering and far-reaching blight had eaten up much of the fruits of the earth; disease and pestilence followed, with wild and wasting havoc; and throughout every cottage in our land were felt the pinchings of dearth and scarcity. We resolved to humble ourselves for these things; for they were of God, we knew, and by us deserved most righteously. Despite, therefore, the taunts of the infidel, and the reproaches of a money-loving world, we took a day from our gains and dedicated it to humiliation and fasting and prayer. The arrival of this day was looked for most anxiously. I think we all had our misgivings whether there was among us faith enough, and love enough, and truth and piety enough, to observe this day devoutly. On looking back to my own feelings, I find myself on that morning

addressing this language to you:—"We meet on an occasion of deep solemnity. Intelligences of the highest order will watch over our present proceedings with interest. For good or for evil, this day must form an era in our moral history—a clue to the religious mind of the nation, it may be the arbiter of its future destinies. One is almost bewildered with the complication of issues suspended on the devout observance of this day, or the infidel neglect of it. Though it be not ours to know the result, the occasion will supply a searching test of our Bible principles, our Gospel courage, our closet habits, our practice of self-denial, our real sympathies in regard to the suffering of our fellow-creatures, and our habitual recognition of the moral control of God. Interests varied and powerful will combine to thwart the moral benefits designed for us by this act of national humiliation. Infidelity, and selfishness, and gain; Edom, and Ammon, and Amalek; the politician, the shopkeeper, and the misled and short-sighted artisan, would all find better expedients for arresting the scourge of the Almighty, than that which ofttime saved Israel from their foes, and from penitent Nineveh averted the uplifted stroke of Heaven." Such was my language then. I admit there is in it much of painful misgiving,—more than the event justified; for never, perhaps, was a day observed with more universal expressions of outward humiliation. But, then, how wonderfully and how graciously hath the predicted benefit referred to in this language been fulfilled—fulfilled, as we may not scruple to aver, in testimony of the Divine approval of this public act, and in answer to a nation's prayers! I hope and trust, therefore, that on this occasion, the heart of the whole nation, as the heart of one man, will render thanks to the God of heaven; that each one among us will be penetrated with a sense of unmerited mercies, in spirit and in truth taking up the words of our text, "I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy; for Thou hast considered my trouble; Thou hast known my soul in adversities."

Taking it for granted, therefore, that I need say no more upon the general proposition, that a rewarded act of national humiliation ought to be followed by a public act of national praise, I shall proceed to consider the text as adapted to our experience of God's loving-kindness towards us, whether in our deliverances from national or individual calamities.

And the first lesson to be gathered from the text is, that the souls of all God's people must have their day of adversity. "Thou hast known my soul in adversities." This, indeed, would follow from the universal methods by which God governs and upholds the world. The present life, as you know, is not a state of retribution, or a place where God professes to discriminate visibly between good men and bad; and, therefore, all national visitations must be inflicted according to a general law. If God "make His sun to shine on the just and on the unjust," what shall forbid His judgments from alighting both on the evil and on the good? Such was inevitably the case during that protracted visitation for deliverance from which we now bless and praise God. Without any bold prying into the councils of Heaven, we may not hesitate to affirm, that it was for our national impieties—our covetousness, our Sabbath-breaking, our luxurious living, our neglect of our fellow-creatures' souls, that the judgments of God were abroad in the earth. And yet on how many did these fall who in the sins that provoked them had not the smallest share! How was the infant of days cut off—by a short road transported to an unsinning and unsorrowing world! How many Christian visitors were cut off, whom no necessity, save that law of love which is of itself a necessity, attracted to the death-bed scene! How many a minister of God was taken away, breaking his bread to the hungry, and speaking words of life to the dying!—all as if to testify that neither adversity nor death hath a commission to pass by the door of a righteous man. And this principle has been observable in the method of God's dealings with His church in every age. Although "the King's daughter be all glorious within," and "her clothing be of wrought gold," yet the name by which she is known in heaven is "afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted." The way to Canaan lay through a howling wilderness, and the way to heaven lies through the porch of sorrow. It is not because we stand highly in God's favour, that therefore



we have the less need for His correcting discipline. When "the whole creation groaneth together," as the apostle says, God's children must bear their part in the mournful concert; and it is no proof that their Father does not love them, even though their groans were the loudest. Reason would not, perhaps, lead us to an opposite conclusion; for we prune the vines while we let the brambles grow, and we apply the rod of chastisement to a hopeful son, while the hardened and disobedient are left to their own devices. Besides, it was to be expected beforehand that godly people should have the larger share of troubles; for they have to bear corrections from two quarters at the same time. The world corrects, or persecutes, them, because they are too good; and God corrects, or chastens, them, because they are not good enough. Neither does a wise man regard these two kinds of correction at all differently. To him the one is just as much a medicine to the soul as the other; for he remembers that the world itself is but a whip in God's hand: its every stripe is numbered; and, however much "the heathen may rage together, and the people imagine a vain thing," yet he feels that there is One seated between the cherubim to tie up their passions, and, the moment they become too violent for His salutary purposes, to "restrain the remainder" of their wrath. Let us not "think it strange," then, brethren, "concerning the fiery trial" which hath "tried" us, and may try us again, "as though some strange thing happened unto us," but rather let us argue on every visitation of God, 'As a nation we deserve His chastisement, and as a church we shall be sanctified by it.' Large legacies pay large duties; and all the sufferings of this present time will be a rent-charge too inappreciable for reckoning in the future portion of the church of God. Besides, we must remember that we were signed with the sign of the cross in our baptism; and this was not only a token that we should profess Christ, but that we should fight for Him and suffer with Him, accompanying Him through all the dangers of the strait and narrow way. The soldier who enters into the ranks with a view to active service must expect to endure hardship; and the mariner who enters upon a long voyage must lay his account with gales and storms. And this applies to all calamities, whether of a national, of a family, or of an individual character. We have all need to look suspiciously on fair-weather Christianity. A long continuance of bright and halcyon days always bode ill, and sometimes bringeth ill, to the soul; and it is time for us to investigate anew the titles of our family inheritance, when we find ourselves exempt from that corrective discipline, of which all are partakers on whom God has bestowed the names of sons and daughters. "If any man will come after Me," saith our Lord, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily." "All who will live godly in Christ Jesus," saith another Scripture, "must suffer persecution;" and though this may come in various forms, and though the cross be that which our Master hath laid upon us, it is the standing law of heaven that if there be no cross, there shall be no crown; if no pruning, no fruit; if no discipline in earth's scene of sorrow, no attaining to the inheritance, or rest, of heaven. Of individual calamities, indeed, the forms are manifold. Death may take away from you a beloved Absalom, or Chaldeans may destroy your goods; an angry fever may smite yourselves, or the bright flower of hope and promise may fade away, as a gourd, in the night; infidels may laugh away your confidence, or prejudiced Pharoshs be found to

"Rob you of that which not enriches them,  
And makes you poor indeed."

Happy and prosperous, therefore, as may be your present circumstances, it is no unsuitable admonition to be forced upon you on a day of thanksgiving, that, under one form or another, you will have to encounter adversities, and therefore it will be your wisdom to look for them, to expect them, to keep your souls in such an attitude as that you may be always prepared to receive them.

Brethren, we call ourselves, and we are, a great nation. "Our merchants are princes, and our traffickers are the honourable of the earth." But look abroad—for we cannot forget, in our rejoicing, that we have cause for much heaviness

of spirit—look abroad, I say, and tell us what mean those words inscribed by some invisible hand on the walls of our commercial palaces? What means it, that every ship which either approaches or leaves our shores, is freighted so heavily with the burden of sad and dismal tidings? What sound is that which speaks to us while the foundations of commercial confidence are heard giving way, burying in its ruins men whose wealth was thought to put them as far beyond the reach of calamity as true integrity had placed them above suspicion and reproach? Brethren, the voice is one, the warning is one; they declare to every one that is among us, “Ye know not what a day may bring forth. Death is a certain thing; judgment is a certain thing; a good hope for the faithful in Christ Jesus, and no hope for them that reject Him, are certain things; besides these, ye know not that there are any other; the rest are shifting as the sand, changeful as a summer cloud—ay, to use an image more transient and fleeting still, unstable as commercial greatness. Learn then, brethren, in your day of adversity, and sorrow, and change, to have your hopes there surely fixed, where true joys are to be found. If you are building a house, you build it for all weathers. You know that the winds will blow and the ruins will beat against it, and you compact all its joints and parts accordingly. Use the same precautions with regard to the house of the soul’s earthly tabernacle. Not only strengthen the most weak and exposed parts, the parts where the keen blasts of temptation would be likely to penetrate the soonest, but also take care to provide and lay in a large store of spiritual comforts for the day of adversity, that when the rain is beating upon the roof, there may be joy and peace in the dwelling; when the sun is darkened above you, you may have a brighter sun within you; in a word, that “as the sufferings of Christ abound in you, so your consolations by Christ may yet more abound.”

But a second reflection suggested by our text is, that whatever our troubles may be, there is One to consider our calamities and to know how long we can bear them. “Thou hast considered and known my soul in adversities.” Affliction often appears to move both God and man; it moves God to consider man’s infirmities, and it moves man to consider his own soul. God is considering when He “stayeth the rough wind;” and man is considering when the keenness of the “east wind” makes him go humbly to his God. The Lord is not confined to “the still small voice,” though He often speaks through it. He can, if He will, employ the tones of the whirlwind; and if these awake us not, He will leave us in the midst of the mighty desolation, saying, “I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence and seek My face; in their affliction they will seek Me early.” Behold, then, why we “count them happy which endure”—because endurance has a tendency to bring God and the sinner together. Prosperity, health, and comfort too often form a great gulf betwixt us and God—a gulf which must either be crossed by a bridge of sighs, or else filled up with the fragments of those earthly idols which our hearts had worshipped instead of God. And when the poor sinner is thus brought unto God, the first petition he prefers is, ‘Lord, consider my affliction; look upon my distress; let Thine eye fasten itself upon my misery and pain.’ For his faith tells him all will be well, if God can be brought to take notice of his low estate—if he can but so draw the regards of Heaven towards himself, that God would “consider his trouble” and “know his soul in adversities.” Know it, indeed, our Father does, far better than we can tell Him; but then it is by putting God in mind of our afflicted condition, that we put ourselves in mind of His many promises to deliver us. Our faith in the Divine promises warms and brightens by the very earnestness with which we plead them; we move God to pity, by moving ourselves to feel that we need pity, and are enabled to draw nigh to God, by the very act of asking God to “draw nigh to us.”

Fear not, then, to show God your distresses, for it is in looking at these, and in suffering these, that Scripture represents one of the chief employments of His ubiquity: “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth.” You have done much, therefore, whenever, by a diligent seeking after God, you have brought Him to take notice of your sorrow, to consider your adversity, to fix his eyes upon you, as Peter did upon the lame man at the beautiful

gate of the temple, only taking care that, like the lame man, you show that you expect to receive something from Him whose attention you have arrested : for otherwise even Omnipotence itself cannot help you. Christ *could* not do any mighty work in Nazareth, we are told, because of the people's unbelief. But, this obstacle not hindering, to have our adversity seen is to have it relieved. One look from God saves us. "I have seen, *I have seen* the affliction of My people which is in Egypt, and have heard their groaning." And what then ? "I am come down to deliver them." Ye will do well, then, brethren, to ask of God to "consider your adversity." Many never knew the depths of their own misery till they were calling upon God to remove it ; and it was by uncovering their plague-spots to His eye, that these spots first became visible to their own. They became acquainted with their sinfulness by confessing it, and by bringing God to consider their misery they brought themselves to consider its cause.

The third and last lesson suggested by our text—and one well suited to this day of thanksgiving—is, that our heavenly Father's consideration of the troubles of His people should supply us with matter for joy and praise. "I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy." We are all more forward to ask for blessings than we are to render God thanks when we have received them. Ten lepers would ask the Saviour for health, but one alone returned to thank Him for it. A day could be taken from our labours to humble ourselves under a scourge, but a day could not be afforded to return thanks for our deliverance. Brethren, this backwardness in thanksgiving ought not so to be. We are hastening to a world where praise is all we shall have to do, and it surely were but fitting that we should begin our rehearsal now. Here we can forbear, and hope, and believe, and pray ; but what room will there be for such like works in heaven ?—for patience where suffering comes not, for faith where all is sight, for hope where

" Bliss immortal reigns,"

for prayer where the souls of the righteous are supplied from an eternal well-spring, even that "River of life," which "proceedeth out of the throne of God ?"

Let us not, then, think that a wearisome task here, which, in the world to come, will be our sole employment. David found it "a joyful and a pleasant thing" to be thankful ; and if we do not find it so too, it is because we do not resort to it oftener. We suffer our heart to get out of tune instead of making it vocal with remembered mercies, by thanksgiving and the voice of melody. Let us not say we have nothing to be thankful for. Not only as a nation have we mercies, which as much distinguish us from other nations as the Jews were distinguished from surrounding Canaanites ; not only are we spared untold and unmeasured calamities, through our late abundant harvest ; but, over and above all this, every household hath its cause for praise. The day hath never yet dawned upon us, which brought not a mercy when it brought us light.

" New mercies each returning day  
Hover around us when we pray ;  
New perils past, new sins forgiv'n,  
New thoughts of God, new hopes of heav'n."

Oh ! brethren, only let your hearts be ready to praise, and God's hand will be open to bless. Cherish that habit of the soul which loves to count its mercies over, which is ever raising some new Ebenezer to tell where God hath been, some sin avoided, some snare escaped, some angel wrestled with from morning till night. Like David's, let your harp be always ready ; like the vestal fire, let your heart be always burning ; so that in "time of tribulation" as well as in "time of wealth," you may have reason to say, "I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy ; for Thou hast considered my trouble, Thou hast known my soul in adversities."

Yes, my brethren, if you will but keep your hearts in readiness for such employments, even in the night of adversity God your Maker will give you many songs ; for He will teach you to feel, that do whatever He will, or withhold whatever He will, He cannot mean to act unkindly by you. It is good-

ness if He give you taught; if He take it away, it is goodness still. The emptiest cup God ever gave His people, was even then brim-full of love. But to perceive this, depends more upon the palate than upon the contents of the cup. The entire stream of God's providences takes its tinge and hue from the scenes it has to pass through; hearts may make it, from their own colour, either to reflect the blue light of heaven, or to frown the blasts of an everlasting storm.

Come, then, brethren, to the table of holy blessing; and come in that happy frame of mind in which, in all that has befallen you, you shall see the Lord God, and trace the love of Heaven. They are not national mercies only, for which we should "rejoice and be glad," though these be great, signal, and undeserved. But I would that your hearts were stirred up this day with a consideration of personal mercies. Is time for repentance given you? It is "of the Lord's mercy that you are not consumed." Does God punish you for the long rejection of His mercy by withholding from you some of His kindest tokens? Say with Ezra, "Thou, O God, hast punished us far less than our iniquities have deserved." Are you bearing to our table the recollection of some answered prayer? Say, "I love the Lord, for He hath heard the voice of my supplication; Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant according to Thy Word." Have you been, as yet, preserved in your commercial relations? Have you seen "hundreds fall at your side" and "great men at your right hand," and yet the plague "has not come nigh you?" Say, "This is the Lord's doing;" "Lord, of Thine own do I now give unto Thee." Or, lastly, hath God now laid His chastisement upon you? yet may you still rejoice. Meekly and trustfully borne, all shall turn out for your advantage. Only say in your heart, "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in very faithfulness hath afflicted me;" and soon shall the tongue answer, "I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy: for Thou hast considered my trouble; Thou hast known my soul in adversities."

Thus do we learn to practise the apostolic injunction, "In everything give thanks." We give thanks for mercies, because they are mercies; we give thanks for troubles, because they lead to mercies, have their fruit in mercies, bringing forth, as they always do, the "peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." Let us, then, give thanks this day to God. Oh! shall the sneer of the scoffer, the coarse remarks of the ignorant, the objections of those practical infidels, who, in every calamity that befalls us, would hold up the finger of scorn, and say, "Tush! the Lord doth not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it,"—shall these, I say, hinder you from hallowing and sanctifying this day to God and to gratitude? Rather let us say with holy Ezra, "After all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that Thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this; should we again break Thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldst not Thou be angry with us till Thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant for escaping?"

Let us, then, brethren, follow, even though it be but afar off, the angels in their blessedness. We cannot begin to learn the new song too soon. It is well that those notes should now celebrate the Redeemer's grace which will soon be required to hymn His noblest praise. The matter of heaven's praise, we nothing doubt, will be the repeated songs of our earthly pilgrimage. Stories of a pilgrimage now brought to a peaceful close—the averted scourge, the mitigated sorrow, the many trials for which stones are erected to show our deliverance on earth, will supply matter for the hymns of heaven; whilst there is one hymn which will arise from both worlds, "I will be glad, and rejoice in Thy mercy."

And here, brethren, I had closed; but, in obedience to a command, which, in the judgment of Christian loyalty, admits of no discretion, I have to announce that a collection will be made after the sermon in behalf of those who are still suffering from the effects of the late visitation. On the expediency or wisdom of this injunction of our rulers, I do not feel myself called upon to offer any opinion. That the acknowledgment of our great mercy should be

accompanied by a suitable thank-offering to Him who is its Author and its Giver, I hope we shall all feel ; but I think I compromise no principle of obedience, either to my Queen or to my diocesan, in saying that the moral expression of this feeling will be the same, whether applied to the purpose specified in the Royal Letter, or conscientiously reserved for any other. To meet, therefore, any possible difference of opinion which may exist as to the best appropriation of our thank-offering, I will do no more than observe, that for those who concur in the government recommendation there will be an opportunity afforded of giving their alms at the church door ; those who wish to dedicate it to any of our local charities, may leave it with myself or the churchwardens in the vestry, or may even include it in the sacramental offering ; whilst those whose only care is that their money be given for some purpose connected with the honour of God and the good of souls, will soon have an opportunity of expending their offerings in a collection, already overdue, for furthering the noble objects of the Church Missionary Society. On this point, therefore, I will say no more ; the aim of my discourse will have been answered, and the spiritual uses of this day promoted, if on the minds of those who will now leave this house, still more, I hope, of those who stay behind, there be left an impression of deep and enduring thankfulness. Let the sepulchre of our forgotten mercies give up its dead ; let benefits be noted down ; let revived hopes tell of unexpected mercies. Poor, indeed, is every offering that we can make to God, at best ; but then religion demands of us, not payment, but acknowledgment ; not the return of our borrowed talents, but the spiritual dedication of ourselves unto Him. “ What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits that He hath done unto me ? ” says the Psalmist. ‘ Oh ! I will requite Him for past good by claiming from Him another ; ’ “ I will take the cup of salvation, and will call upon the name of the Lord.”

# CHRIST THE RESURRECTION AND LIFE OF A NATION.

## A Harvest Thanksgiving Sermon,

BY THE

REV. HENRY CHRISTMAS, M.A., F.R.S., F.S.A.,

PREACHED IN VERULAM EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, LAMBETH,  
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 17, 1847.

Being the Day appointed for a General Thanksgiving for the late Abundant Harvest.

*"I am the Resurrection and the Life."*—John xi. 25.

FROM the time that man fell from his original righteousness, renounced his allegiance to his Maker, and forfeited at once his immortality here, and his claim to felicity hereafter, the pre-determined goodness and love of God began its mighty work of reconciling the world unto Himself. That dispensation of peace into which the angels desire, and as yet desire vainly, to look, began even then to flash its light through the clouds of Divine wrath, and gave in its first promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," some hope, distant indeed, but resting on the certainty of God's word, of man's restoration to his pristine state. And from that time forward, like the darkness that breaks into twilight, and the twilight into the dawn, did it grow and increase in splendour. The communion of God with the patriarchs, His fearful miracles in Egypt, the cloud by day, and the fire by night, by which He led His people out of the house of bondage, the law revealed amid thunders and earthquakes upon Mount Sinai, the visible glory of the all Holy One resting upon his mercy-seat, the long train of prophets, and judges, and inspired writers, that brightened the Judaic era, kept up the expectation and engaged the attention of mankind, till the fulness of time was come, and God appeared in the likeness of man. It was not till the settlement of the tribes in Canaan that the scattered commands of the Lord were digested into one code, and the ceremonial law, with its gorgeous worship and its minute observances, embodied in itself all the types of a more spiritual, but as yet far distant, dispensation. There was indeed the sacrifice for sin, and the scape-goat, and the cleansing from ceremonial pollution, but there was also the promise of a Messiah who should tell His people what all these things meant, and by the very promise was the insufficiency of the type declared.

But it is not only in the establishment of the Mosaic Law that we are to look for the shadowing forth of the New Covenant; in every part of the Jewish polity we see the same great design, the same once hidden but now revealed meaning. In the prince and warrior Joshua, who drew the sword of the Lord, and aided by the arm of Jehovah, scattered hither and thither the armies of the aliens, destroyed their strongholds, trampled under foot the crowns of their monarchs, and utterly exterminated their people; in the vehement and impetuous Gideon—in that most perfect prince, the man after God's own heart—can we not see the fit representatives of Him who was to overcome Sin and Death, to lead His people into everlasting peace; to teach them to pray and to worship in spirit and in truth, and finally sitting upon the throne of His kingdom, to bring all nations into subjection? This polity, this series of types, and miracles, and priests, and prophets, was the work of long ages. Moses led the people of the Lord through wonders such as earth hath not since beheld, into the land promised to their ancestor; and when they were about to enter in, he became the officiating priest at the most awful ceremony which the sacred writings relate—the giving of the Law.

Here let us pause for a moment. Can we imagine that while the thunders of God were yet sounding in their ears, while the thick darkness in which He sat enshrined was yet unrolled away from the burning top of Sinai, and ere Moses

their ruler was yet dismissed from the ineffable presence,—can we imagine that while the rocks of the desert were yet re-echoing the words spoken by no mortal voice, those who had been thus led, thus preserved, thus instructed, could fall into idolatry? And yet—how lamentable is the fact!—so it was. There was indeed the form of religion, but not the life. It would seem that the lapses of the Israelites into idolatry evidenced, more than any thing else, the incompleteness of their dispensation. Christ the Life was not yet come. Afterwards, when they were settled in the promised land, when their foes were either slain or subjugated, and when the due performance of their august and splendid ritual was the only legitimate object of their care, then they fell again and again into the foul impurities, the gross absurdities, and the diabolical cruelties of the pagan worship around them; the frame of their religion was perfect, but the Spirit, the Life which was to animate it, was yet wanting. Ere we proceed to another part of our subject we will take one more glance at the chosen people. The Lord was at length wearied with their apostacies. The reformation introduced by Josiah, though it secured for that exemplary sovereign the favour of the God of Israel, was insufficient to turn away the fierce anger already denounced against a rebellious and idolatrous nation. The young and pious king went down to the graves of his fathers, and the Babylonian potentate put an end to the temporal kingdom of Judah. The Jews had before been tried by temporary enslavement, by reverses in war, by sack and pillage, by the desecration of their temple, and the degradation of their princes, by the sword, and the famine, and the pestilence. They were now led away at once into captivity, deprived of empire, and prevented from worshipping their God according to His law. And now, when they recollected what they had been, how did their neglected privileges arise in reproachful shapes before the eyes of their minds! how bitterly did they lament the want of those golden opportunities which when present they had despised, and when frequent they had neglected! There was, however, one good effect produced by the captivity: from that time, though the sceptre was in one sense departing, and in another departed, though they lived on their return as aliens in their own land, they relapsed not into idolatry. Life was wanting in their religion, but it was free from mixture with pagan corruption. The old covenant dispensation lay now like the body of a giant; before it had been like the dry bones in the valley of Ezekiel, and the winds of Heathenism rattled amongst them. Gradually, as the dispensation proceeded, and became more clearly and more spiritually defined, the flesh began to grow, the joints were knit together with strength, and the limbs clothed with beauty. It lay compact and mighty, but motionless, breathless, lifeless. But the fulness of time was now come. The sceptre had departed from Judah. The Gentiles were to be gathered into the fold of God, and it was fit that this great body of religion should live, and move, and speak. Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God, breathed into the nostrils of this frame, yet still and lifeless, the breath of life; and the Jewish Covenant, like a giant refreshed with new wine, sprang up in the perfect form of Christianity, and, flinging aside the trammels of the ceremonial law as now no longer hindering, prepared, not to guide the opinions of one people, to overcome the prejudices of one government, and to bear through the persecutions of one priesthood, but to call nations and empires to its footstool; to carry on open and exterminating war against the world, the flesh, and the devil, against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places; against error, and cruelty, and superstition, and hypocrisy, wheresoever found; and while its grand and comprehensive aim was to evangelize the whole human race, it proclaimed in tones that reached the very verge of creation, that Christ is indeed the Resurrection and the Life.

There is another point of view in which to look at this all-important subject; we have seen Christ making the dispensation of Moses a living covenant of grace, as the breath of life breathed into the nostrils of man made him a living soul. Let us now look at the world, alive only to sin, active only in rebellion, and we shall be convinced, that if ever it be restored to the favour of God, it can only be done by Him who is the Resurrection as well as the Life. So sunk is it in iniquity, so dead in trespasses and sins, that it will be aroused only by the voice of its Creator, and will require a greater effort of power to redeem it, than was put forth

in the hour of its creation. It is something to look as patriarchs did, to the promise of a Saviour. It is something to feel as the Jews did that they were chosen by their Maker from out of the rest of the world; ay, it was indeed a great and blessed distinction that was vouchsafed to these highly favoured individuals, but all were not so separated. There were those to whom the oracles of God were sealed, to whom the mercies of God were unannounced, and to these it was something inexpressibly valuable to know that there was a life beyond the present. Their own hearts told them that they had something to look forward to, when the scenes of this world were no longer before them; they were a law unto themselves; and deeply did the better among them meditate and speculate upon the immortality of the soul, and the certainty of consciousness in a future state. Dark as they were, the Father of Lights had yet allowed some rays from his supreme glory to penetrate into their hearts; there were some among them who bowed down before Him in ignorance, and amid natural darkness worshipped the God of truth. Some few had heard of the wonders which the Lord did in Egypt; and the captive Hebrew, when he sat down by the rivers of Babylon, and hung his harp on the willows, would yet sigh forth in the hearing of the heathen, the name of Jehovah. But these were only the exceptions. The Gentile world was given up to work all uncleanness with greediness; and though arts and arms, and science and philosophy, were flourishing, though the kingdoms of the known world were lying in lowly subjection beneath the sceptre of the Cæsars, though the moral teachers of that age spake wisely and well, yet, were the moral lessons unheeded, the philosophy falsely so called, and the peace but a cessation from battle. The world was lying in wickedness. It was dead in trespasses and sins; and when the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in His wings, when the path of the Redeemer was paved with worldly peace, and the peace which passeth knowledge began to dawn upon the minds of His followers, when morality began to be practised as well as understood, then the heathen world felt that the long desired stimulus was at length applied, and that they beheld Him who was the Resurrection and the Life.

This is the only true philosophy, this the only available morality. We may address ourselves in vain to each separate passion, may show the consequences of vice, and discuss the advantages of virtue; but our efforts will be powerless, and our exhortations wasted upon the air. The moralists of old times were often men gifted above their fellows, their systems were beautiful and logical, and their lives often exemplary; but the disorders which they attempted to remedy were beyond the reach of human art; precept and example were alike unavailing; and it was not until life and immortality were brought to light through the Gospel, that a more efficacious system was introduced. Christ has taught us to go directly to the heart, to exhibit *Him*, the Gate, the Vine, the Way, and then when He has given His blessing, shed into our hearts the love of His name, and caused us to learn of Him, then, and not till then, shall we find His yoke easy and His burden light: then, and not till then, shall we be enabled to acknowledge Christ the Resurrection and the Life. But oh! if these are interesting themes—and to whom are they not interesting?—how glorious is the retrospect of the Redeemer's career upon earth! There may we behold Him drying up the tears of the widow of Nain, restoring to life and consciousness the daughter of Jairus, giving her again to the embrace of her father and the congratulations of her friends; there may we behold Him re-assembling the already scattered elements, and recalling the spirit to animate once more the flesh that had seen corruption. It must indeed have been a thrilling moment for those who heard those deep and commanding accents, "Lazarus, come forth," to have seen the bands of death broken, and the power of dissolution destroyed; to have beheld the hand of the Saviour resting upon the now empty monument where but lately the worm was revelling, and to have traced conviction in the countenances of the awe-struck bystanders attesting the resurrection and the life. These are matters of history; they show us the general character of our Lord's mission, they point out its effects upon society, and they explain how His miracles—wonderful, and beneficent, and divine, as they were—were yet but types, but faint emblems, of the greater and more extensive influence of His religion. We might indeed lead you to contemplate the temporal blessings for which the world



is indebted to Christianity—the purer morality, the sounder philosophy ; we might call your attention to the stream of public benevolence flowing through so many channels and embracing so many objects, calling forth the bounty of the liberal, and enlisting on the side of humanity even the pride of the ostentatious ; we might advert to the less barbarous manners of war, the nobler principles of legislation, the more equal civilization of society. All these advantages which we enjoy above the most eminent nations of antiquity we owe to the Gospel. Why should we speak of the cessation of slavery, the punishment of oppression, the circulation of knowledge, and the encouragement of virtue ? These are but the indirect effects of the Christian scheme ; and were the world indeed full of knowledge, did peace every where prevail, and love universally flourish, still would the Gospel point our thoughts forward, would teach us that here we see through a glass darkly, though we shall see face to face. Our utmost attainments are but as midnight, compared with that knowledge that shall burst upon us when set free from the body.

And yet we may recognize, and that too in a very indistinct manner, the way in which it has pleased our Heavenly Father to show us the connexion between Him and ourselves—between obedience and prosperity—between virtue and happiness—between prayer and praise. He has exhibited Himself as a God of nations, as well as a God of individuals, and has taught us of late as well as of old, by judgments as well as by mercies ; and more especially would I wish to draw your attention to this connexion as He has in the late instance manifested it. We had as a nation sinned against Him—who can sum up the amount of our national offences ?—and He visited us in anger. It forms no part of my present plan to point out what particular sins drew down upon us the Divine displeasure ; let each among us meditate on that topic for himself. We shall doubtless acknowledge that we *had* sinned—that we *have* sinned, and that God's anger was manifested. But like Ahab of old, we humbled ourselves ; and never was a public day of fasting and self-abasement more universally or more religiously kept. And what, I pray you, was the result ? The hearts of the whole nation had been bowed down as the heart of one man ; the famine prevailing among us was recognized as the visitation of God for our sins—and our humiliation was accepted. "Though he was angry with us, His anger is turned away, and lo ! He comforteth us."—the windows of heaven were opened, and a blessing so bounteously poured forth upon our fields, that, to use the emphatic language of our liturgy, "Our dearth and scarcity was turned into cheapness and plenty." Here, then, is one among many instances in which national prayers have been followed by an immediate blessing. It seems as though God were waiting to be gracious ; as though the earth had received a mysterious and secret command to put forth her stores with more than usual abundance, as soon as the inhabitants thereof had acknowledged their sins, and turned in sorrow and penitence and humility to the Lord. And who can describe the feelings of grateful happiness with which the joyous accounts were received from time to time and from every part of this vast empire, that the food of man was at once so plentiful and so good ?—for the quality as well as the quantity of the late harvest has shown the lovingkindness of God towards us. And now it becomes our joyful duty to render thanks to the Lord of lords for this renewed instance of His mercy, and with hearts penetrated with gratitude to implore a continuance of His most gracious favour.

But I will briefly notice some popular objections to the time selected for this thanksgiving. It has been said generally, and said with much truth, that we should have been much earlier, and that as we gave up a day from the midst of the week to pour forth our supplications, so we should have done the same to offer up our thanksgivings ; and for these things our rulers have suffered some blame. I apprehend, however, that there are satisfactory reasons for both parts of the enactment, and as it may remove some feeling of discontent, I shall briefly state what I understand those reasons to have been. It has been but within the last fortnight that the harvest has been gathered in, in the northern provinces of these kingdoms ; and as the whole nation was to be called on to rejoice and praise God together, so it was well that every where the full amount of the blessing should be known and felt. This has thrown *our* thanksgivings to a comparatively late period ; but we

have humbly and reverently offered up the usual thanksgiving for plenty, and that, sabbath by sabbath, for many weeks past. The reason for choosing a sabbath day, is of another character; it bears reference, not to the gracious works of God, but to the hard hearts and selfish feelings of men! It appears that on the day of public humiliation, not a few of those who held in their employment large numbers of their poorer fellow-men, withheld from them the wages due for that day, compelling them to a day of non-employment, but deducting from the week's gains the amount they would have earned. This was extensively the case, not with individuals only, but even with great public companies. To obviate a repetition of conduct like this, and to avoid turning what should be a day of joy, into one of privation and distress, our rulers have felt themselves compelled to select the Sabbath-day as the day of our general thanksgiving! Who can hear this, and not blush for the spirit of worldliness—the worship of mammon which it displays! The rulers of the most Christian land, as it boasts itself, dared not ask *one* day to be given by the *most Christian* inhabitants of that land for the purpose of thanking Almighty God for blessings of a most bountiful character, because they knew that so little was there of Christian charity, so little expansive benevolence, so little real acknowledgment of God in the hearts of the rich, that the enactment would be used as an engine of oppression! Alas, for London!—alas, for England! If the things which had been done in thee had been done in Tyre and Sydon, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes!

We have spoken of temporal mercies, of blessings connected with this world, and let us not in the midst of our thanksgivings, forget that these are transient blessings, and that this life is a transient state. The earth, though its mountains may seem everlasting and its oceans designed to roll on for ever, shall utterly melt away from the presence of Him who called it into existence. Those high and splendid bodies, that perchance in the awful course circle the throne of the Most High, shall fall from their places and sink into annihilation. But into the spirit of man hath God infused a part of His own infinity; the soul knows no termination of its existence, and capable as it is of comprehending in part, and shall be of comprehending wholly, the mysteries of redemption and of providence, it is more august than the visible creation, more important than the boundless systems above us and around us. Oh! if there were some watch-tower in the realms of space, from which we could behold all the works of the Deity, and mark them as they sweep along in their illimitable course, rejoicing in the brightness of their shining; if we could count the stars as they wheeled past us and call them by their names, and weigh them in the balances, the thought would still recur to our minds—‘These are all finite, these are but of transient duration, but the eye that looketh upon them shall look on for ever, though they may no longer be existing in its field of vision. ‘The spirit that could grasp the vast idea of their extent, will continue in its powers unshaken, long after they have crumbled away into their original nothing. And if that eye found unspeakable delight in gazing upon the throne and upon the Lamb; if that spirit, like a chord attuned in unison with the master-chord of lyre, responded its hallelujahs in praise of Him who sitteth upon the throne,—what! what can be compared in value to an eternity so employed? What sacrifice can be too great to save myriads, nay, millions of such spirits from an eternity of unutterable anguish? Here then is the great design of this wonderful dispensation. It is to dissipate the mildew of sin; it is to fit the soul for a blessed immortality; and, when by the ordinances of God awakened from its moral lethargy, to fix its attention on the Resurrection and the Life. To bear the punishment of our iniquity was Christ our passover sacrificed for us. Well might He exclaim, who knew, as none other knew it, ‘What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?’ Solemn as were the words of our text, applicable alike to the church and the world, illustrated by the Jewish covenant and the Israelitish polity, by the history of mankind at large, and by the onward career of refinement, and morality, and civilization, and intellectual culture, their import would be but imperfectly understood by those who should confine them within these limits. If it were a great thing to raise the Levitical dispensation from its torpid state, to invest it with new life, and under a new and

perfect shape to extend it to all mankind ; if it were a great thing to arouse the world from its death in wickedness, to infuse into it a principle of vitality, which like the little leaven shall one day leaven the whole lump ; how far more mighty and glorious a work is it, to recover the immortal spirit from a state of death, a death caused by the leprosy of sin, to prevent the waves of damnation from closing over a being, which, however fallen, still retains that immortality which it derived from its Divine Maker, and whereby it claimed an alliance with His nature. It was to this spiritual resurrection that the words of our text particularly referred. God looketh at the inward parts, and however we may flatter ourselves that we perform in an exemplary manner the duties of our station, that in a spiritual sense we are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, we may depend on God's word, that if these works spring not from a lively faith in Jesus, they are but dead works and ourselves in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.

Let us not in these words be misunderstood. The good works of believers are in themselves no more meritorious than similar works done by the carnally minded, there is no actual merit in either case ; and the believer will feel the unprofitableness of his service to God, and the impossibility of keeping up with the requirements of a law so just and pure as His. But this spirit of humility, this reliance upon the merits of the Saviour and not upon our own, is that which makes the works of men, under the influence of grace, acceptable with God ; and this is wanting in the unawakened. The carnally minded may do virtuous actions, they may fulfil the relative duties of life, they may even keep up a show of religion, and thereby acquire the respect of the world, and a certain dreamy quietness or rather carelessness of conscience, and the temporal respect, and credit, and comfort and prosperity thus obtained they deserve, but " verily they have their reward." God is not in all their thoughts, and they are indeed dead in trespasses and sins ; and if such as these be dead, what shall we say to those who pay even no outward respect to religion, who are openly enlisted on the side of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and who count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing ? " Be not deceived ; God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." There is, however, a promise not unaccompanied with a command, " Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." And God is calling us with a trumpet-voice to awake and arise now ! We are to thank Him for His late mercies vouchsafed to us—but we are also to remember His late and His *present* judgments ! Ill would it become the ministers of Christ to repress the spirit of gratitude, and not cordially to join with our rulers in calling on you to acknowledge the long-suffering and loving-kindness of our God. Still worse would it become them to omit the warnings which these portentous times convey. Let us then praise God, but let us praise Him in deep humility. Even now the heavy hand of chastisement is upon us, and while the voice of humble thankfulness should be, and we trust is raised to the divine throne, the voice of jubilant self-congratulation would be but ill indeed adapted to our condition. In one part of our empire we see starvation, in another sedition, and almost rebellion, every where commerce and manufactures languishing, thousands deprived of employment ; and in the very heart of the financial world, a state of paralysis and wide-spread derangement, to which the history of a century can find no parallel, and for which no one even dares to hope a speedy remedy ; the rich are becoming poor, the poor are becoming indigent, the indigent are becoming desperate ! Colossal fortunes and reputations, commercial reputations which have been the growth of half a century, have been swept away in an hour, and alas ! it is but too clear that this terrific crisis has been brought upon us by a spirit of selfishness, of Mammon worship and excessive speculation. Truly, " he who hasteth to be rich shall not escape a snare." Nor is this all.—From the East, steadily advancing towards us, sweeps on in its desolating career that awful scourge of God, the Cholera ! Step by step we track it as it comes nearer and nearer, and on the wings of the eastern gale, there seems borne onward the sound of destroying footsteps—the solemn march of the Angel of Death ! Yet let us thank God with fear and trembling. He hath smitten and he can he us—he can preserve us from coming dangers, as well as remedy the effects of past

calamities ; but we must recognize him in our hearts at once. We must remember that nations are composed of individuals, national piety of individual piety ; nor do we know how near each one of us may be to making up the number for whose sake God will spare England, as he would for the sake of *ten* have spared Sodom of old !

Let us then as individuals seek the Lord. "Awake," he exclaims, "awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Then when you are thus raised, when your heart and your conduct agree, when the Spirit of God dwelleth in you, and love hath sprung up where once the more malignant passions had sway, and twining round every fibre of your nature, joins in the bands of Christian charity, those who were before hateful and hating one another ; when the yoke once thought so irksome shall be found easy, and the burden once considered so heavy shall be found light, then is the believer enabled to awake, to arise from the dead, and to rejoice in Christ Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life. But not only is our spiritual death evinced by dead works, by conduct which though virtuous in itself arises not from a faith unfeigned ; but it is also lamentably exhibited by an unproductive faith, a faith which brings forth no fruits. "Faith," says St. James, "without works is dead." It is the tree without the sap, and which ought not so much to be called a tree as a dry and barren log, whose end is to be burned, and to whose root the axe is already laid. Our Lord, when he left the throne of His glory and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross, did so, not only that he might take our sins upon Him and suffer in our stead, not only that His active righteousness might be imputed unto us, but also that He might leave us an example to follow in His steps. "He that will be My disciple," was His holy word, "let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." And well did His apostles understand the import of their Divine Master's command. "Be ye," says one of them, "followers of us, even as we are of Christ." And what the course of our Lord was, that, so far as our imperfect nature will allow, must be ours. He went about doing good, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, healing the sick, instructing the ignorant, exhorting the careless, confirming the faint, encouraging the feeble-minded. Such are fruits of a living faith, and where these are absent then is faith dead, and profession unavailing. We can examine our own lives and our own hearts, the one for conduct, and the other for motives ; and if we have thus walked before God, not in the hopes of meriting aught from Him, but because the love of Christ constrained us, then are we followers of Him, and our faith evinces by its fruits that it springs from Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. Perchance there are some among you who have neither faith nor works, who are twice dead and near to be plucked up by the roots. Yet for you also, whether you prepare for it or no, there shall be a resurrection and an eternity of life. The lethargy which now enwraps your senses must one day be dissipated, and you, together with all mankind, stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. With what feelings will you then behold the countless multitude of saints at His right hand, and know that you might have taken your place among them ! With what horror will you behold the moral deadness of your nature, and know that like a spirit imprisoned for ever in a dead body, so will your existence be continued in a state of moral death. The sensations of agony and horror and disgust, all the darker and fiercer passions will live, but the last faint spark of the Divine nature will be extinguished, and alas ! extinguished for ever. Consciousness, remaining only as a torment, will but show the unspeakable terrors of such a condition, and throw a new and fearful light on the tremendous misery of the second death.

From the danger of a state like this you may yet be delivered. And oh ! if the word of preaching, uttered though it be in great feebleness, could but by the blessing of God reveal to you your perilous condition, then would you behold your best affections dead and fast mouldering away : gratitude, love, justice, like the dry branches of a withered tree ; the fruit decayed, the leaves faded, and the very root approaching to rottenness. But yet, even yet there is a principle of vitality within. The Sun of Righteousness may shine, and the dew of grace may fall, till the tree is again flourishing, the branches again spreading, till the leaves shall grow verdant, and the fruit ripen ; and you, instead of being cut down by the severe judgment of God, shall rejoice in Christ Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life.

MERCIES ABUSED, THE PRECURSORS OF WRATH.

## A Harvest Thanksgiving Sermon,

BY THE

REV. ROBERT BICKERSTETH, B.A.

PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, CLAPHAM-RISE,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 17, 1847.

Being the Day appointed for the General Thanksgiving for the late abundant Harvest.

*"If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good."*—Joshua xxiv. 20.

THIS emphatic threatening was in the first instance delivered to the people of Israel. The speaker was Joshua, that eminent man who had been appointed to the leadership of the nation after the death of Moses. He had witnessed the dealings of God with the people from the earliest period of their history as a nation. He had been a constant spectator of the marvellous things which God had wrought for them; in their extrication from Egypt; in their preservation during the forty year's sojourn in the desert. His singular fidelity and courage had procured for him an exemption—of which only one beside himself shared—from destruction in the wilderness. The whole of that multitude, who originally crossed the Red Sea—that is, of all who were then come to years of maturity—were sentenced to perish in the desert, on account of their provocations against the Lord; to Joshua and Caleb alone was it reserved to cross the Jordan, and enter upon the possession of the promised inheritance of Canaan. Long acquaintance, therefore, with God's dealings towards Israel, well qualified him to deliver such caution as that which is met with in the text. He had beheld the people, at various periods of their history, fall into crime which elicited vengeance, and notwithstanding all the deliverances which God had wrought for them, and the promises which God had made to protect and to bless them, this did not shield them from wrath when, by their provocations they deserved chastisement. The experience which Joshua had in this respect led him to predict with the more confidence, the certainty of punishment to the nation, should they in future transgress the commandments of God. Their past history seemed to warrant the expectation that disobedience would in all cases be visited with sore judgment. They were by no means to persuade themselves, that because they had been made the objects of multiplied favours, they might not become the objects of stern and tremendous retribution; mercies offered no warrant to presume on the meeting with no judgments; rather, as the language of the text would seem to indicate, abused privileges would be sure to provoke all the more keen retribution—"For if ye forsake the Lord," it is said, "and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good."

But there is no reason to limit the declaration to the dealings of the Almighty with His ancient people. If, notwithstanding all that God had done for Israel, their departure from His testimonies would ensue the visitation of His anger, the like thing may be expected in the case of all those of whom it may be affirmed, "The Lord hath done them good." The good thus experienced is never to be considered as any guarantee that wickedness will not bring down evil. It may be "after the Lord hath done good," after He has manifested a determination to bless, that wanton provocation may move Him to turn against a nation, or an individual, for "his hurt and destruction." "If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then He will turn and consume you, after that He hath done you good."

Our main endeavour in what follows, will be to enforce the truth which is contained in this brief, but most emphatic warning. We feel that a warning of this nature is by no means inappropriate to an occasion like the present, set apart though it be, for a National Thanksgiving. If we are to reap the benefit of praising God for His goodness, whereof we have partaken so largely, it is well for us to be reminded, that there is at least a possibility of challenging heavier wrath than any which has been yet experienced, should we by our rebellion in future, be guilty of "forsaking the Lord, and serving strange gods."

We would apply ourselves, then, in dependence upon Divine teaching, to show you how reason and justice concur in the warning here delivered by Joshua. We will strive to illustrate, in the first place, the reasonableness of expecting that abused mercies must lead to more aggravated punishment; and in the second place, we will point out the justice of the dealing, to which allusion is made by the words, "If ye forsake the Lord and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good."

I. Now, in the first instance, let us glance briefly at the history of God's ancient people, the Jews. It is well known that the dealings of God with that nation may be regarded as a kind of epitome of His dealings with mankind in general; so that from the observation of what befel them, we may derive inferences as to what may be expected to befall others. You are to look upon this people, then, as having been selected of God, from amongst all other people of the earth, to become in a peculiar sense, His own adopted children. In multiplied instances may it be declared that God proved his determination to do them good. He rescued them from sore bondage in Egypt; He formed them into a nation for Himself; He interposed to defend them from danger, and to afford the supply of their every want; He fed them by miracles; He opened the windows of heaven to afford them bread to eat, and He brought water for them out of the flinty rock; He guided them by a pillar of cloud—the visible token of His presence amongst them; He gave them the clear revelation of His will; they lived beneath a noble theocracy; God was their ruler; God was their guardian; God was their king. He gave them statutes and ordinances; He instructed them in the knowledge of Himself, and taught them the right method of approach to His throne. He held constant intercourse with them. In every difficulty they could appeal to Jehovah as a present defender. "What nation was there that ever had God so nigh unto them, in all things that they called to Him for?" Moreover, He made them the depository of the lively oracles. To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. Of that nation it was promised that the Mediator should spring, in whom all tribes and all families of the earth were to be blessed. It were endless to enumerate all of those proofs which were given to the Jewish nation, of a fixed determination on the part of God to do them good. There were temporal promises which the Almighty made to them, by which, if the expression be lawful, Jehovah was pledged for their succour and defence; and never hath there existed the people who could appeal to such tokens of Divine guardianship, or exult with such assurance in the certainty that God designed to do them good. The Most High appears to have bound Himself, with relation to this race, in a sense in which He hath bound Himself to no people beside; and if the experience of "good" at the Lord's hand might ever seem as the warrant to anticipate no evil, then might the Israelites as a nation have prided themselves on the favours divinely shown them, and have employed them as the ground for bidding defiance to the approach of disaster. We all know, however, that Israel as a nation, grievously abused the privileges which God vouchsafed. There was no blessing whereof they partook, which they did not convert into an occasion of sin. Their provocations were more frequent and more multiplied than their mercies. Their career as a nation was marked by perfidy and ingratitude; at almost every step of their progress we find them in rebellion against the Most High—"forsaking the Lord, and serving strange gods." And how did God deal with them when they thus acted? Is it not the case that He scourged them, and caused them to suffer punishment? Long indeed, and oft did He forbear with them; "He was so merciful to them He forgave their misdeeds, and did not stir up all His wrath." The day of mercy,

however, came to a close ; ill-requited goodness and long-suffering at last moved Him to meet them in vengeance, and " He turned against them to do them hurt and consume them." Look at the plagues that befel them in the desert ; look at the slaughters which God permitted them to experience in warfare with their enemies. Look at the pestilence that devoured their national strength ; look at the famines with which God punished their disobedience, and then call to mind the captivities they endured ; and have you not in all this an exemplification of the truth, that when they forsook the Lord and served strange gods, " He turned against them to hurt and consume them ?"

And who can survey the subsequent history of the Jews, and not read a fulfilment of the threatening contained in our text ? It was " to do them good," that God raised up the Saviour, according to His promise and covenant. It was in the rich exuberance of His love and compassion, that in spite of all past provocation, God sent His own Son in the likeness of our flesh ; to be " born of a woman, to be made under the law," to walk upon earth as the image of the invisible Jehovah. And who can trace the history of the Mediator's life upon earth ; who can survey Him moving amongst His countrymen, the dispenser of blessing, and the healer of every curse, without perceiving that it was " to do them good" that God sent amongst them His Son Jesus ? But alas ! the Mediator encountered only persecution and scorn ; the contempt and ill-will of the vast majority of the nation, to whom, according to the flesh He belonged. His own, to whom He came, received Him not ; they conspired against Him and slew Him, and thus filled up the measure of their iniquity " in forsaking the Lord ;" and then it was that the fierceness of the Divine anger was aroused, and " He turned against them, to hurt and to consume them." Ay, it was not because of the many promises which had been made to them, nor yet because of the varied interposition of mercy which had been shown in their behalf, that God could not be moved to punish and destroy. He forebore, indeed, with long and unexampled compassion ; He would fain have withheld from chastising their iniquity ; but there was a point beyond which even Divine pity could not spare ; and at length, in tremendous severity, did God visit and chastise the provocations of His people. The vials of His wrath were expended on the guilty metropolis of Judea ; the conquering armies of the Romans were permitted to overrun and lay waste the inheritance once given to the chosen people. The devoted inhabitants perished miserably before the sword of their adversaries, whilst those who escaped were driven into all corners of the earth, for a proverb and a bye-word amongst all nations. And now, if you look at Palestine, its hills and its valleys, occupied by the foe-men to Israel ; the once favoured territory, on which dwelt the tribes of the Lord, tenanted by the sons of the stranger ; or whether you look at the fragments of that once mighty and glorious nation of the Jews everywhere dispersed, and despoiled of their strength and their glory ; what can you discover in all this, if not a verification of the saying, as uttered by Joshua of old—" If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good."

And what we are desirous you should gather from the foregoing observations, is mainly this, that no experience of good at the hands of the Almighty affords warrant to expect that future disobedience will not be visited with righteous severity. We observe, that every reason was given the Israelites to expect favour at God's hands ; they had promises of protection which might well inspire them with confidence in the Almighty, and God had done so much for them they might easily come to presume that He would continue to defend and to bless them. For no other nation has the Almighty ever so visibly interfered ; and hence might the Jews have argued of old, that no evil should ever overtake them ; they were the favourites of heaven, whom God would never destroy. We observe, how this conclusion is falsified in their national history ; presuming upon God's goodness, they thought not of His threatenings, and thus moved Him at length to " turn and do them hurt, and consume them ;" and be assured, the same thing may occur again. There is, we believe, a strong tendency to misinterpret the experience of Divine favours ; we look upon them as proofs that we are the objects of a mercy which can never fail to display itself, and thus, in place of using them as the incentives to greater diligence in God's service, we rather employ them as the ground for relax-

ing in obedience. Men scarcely think it possible, that after having been made the objects of so much goodness they shall become the objects of as distinguished vengeance. It were easy to adduce illustrations of this—illustrations borrowed from what is ordinarily experienced of God's dealings, whether in providence or in grace. It sometimes happens to an individual that he is made the object of some marked providential dispensation. In some conspicuous method, God has interfered in his behalf. It may have been, by crowning him with unexpected success in the prosecution of his ordinary avocation; or possibly, by extricating him from some pressing difficulty; or by shielding him in the moment of some unforeseen trial. In one or other of these ways there has been a manifest putting forth of Divine power in his behalf; the interference has been so plainly due to the Most High, that not a doubt can be entertained of its origin; the good experienced may have come in direct answer to prayer, and thus the favour admit of no other interpretation than a token of Divine goodness. Perhaps it was extraordinary success in business, or it may have been deliverance from apprehended danger, or restoration from sickness to health; but whatever the special instance may have been, it was so clearly a Divine interference of which the individual has been made the object, that he can be at no loss to trace in it the design of God "to do him good." Now, where the danger lies, is in wrongly mis-interpreting the deliverance, with respect to the future conduct. There is a great tendency to repose in the past deliverance, without using it as the motive to future obedience. The individual may come to think, that having been made the recipient of such signal mercy, it can never be the design of the Almighty to visit him with as signal punishment. Oh! we may easily form a rash conjecture of this kind, forgetting the purpose of God in the showing mercy, namely, to bind the individual over the more unreservedly to His service; and if this purpose be overlooked—if, in spite of the proof which has been afforded of God's willingness to bless, there be no exhibition on our part of willingness to obey, then may the subsequent experience serve only to attest how true it is, "If ye forsake the Lord and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good."

And what occurs under the providential dealings of the Almighty, may occur likewise in spiritual matters. It is no uncommon thing for a person to experience so much of spiritual awakening as may justly lead him to conclude that God is at work with him "to do him good." What we have to guard against is, simply the taking for granted, that because we have largely partaken of spiritual mercies, we cannot through disobedience incur spiritual chastisements. I take, for example, the instance of one, who through God's mercy, has been seriously impressed, and brought to concern for his soul's welfare. He cannot be otherwise than conscious of the wonderful change, and he rightly interprets the dealings of God with him, as an evidence that God designs his real welfare. We must all be aware that the faintest desire after holiness is a gift, for which we are indebted to the Divine Spirit, and that every token of spiritual life is a boon which God can alone bestow. It militates not against this truth, that man is required to co-operate in the work of making his "calling and election sure;" he must strive in dependance upon Divine agency, although all his own striving, apart from such help, were wholly insufficient. It is no uncommon thing, however, for a person to experience much of spiritual awakening without entering upon that bold and decisive profession of Christianity, which evidences a person to be in the pathway to heaven. A great deal has been done for him, in producing within the heart any conviction of sin, or desire after holiness; and the individual for whom so much has been wrought, knowing that for the change thus far, he is altogether indebted to Divinity, may come to repose in past experience, without resigning himself might and main to future obedience. He will think it altogether impossible, that having so far been made the subject of converting grace, as to be conscious of deep convictions of guilt, and of earnest aspirations after heaven, he should be ever left to experience the vengeance of the Almighty. Oh! and it is to such an one that the language of the text ought to come home with all that is most thrilling in the shape of warning. We admit the proofs you allege of the "goodness of God;" we trace the manifestations of His love in your having been brought in any measure beneath the power of conviction, in your having been impressed with the



fear of judgment, or with the hope of heaven, but we discern in all this a design on God's part that you should devote yourself henceforth unreservedly to His service ; and if, through disobedience on your part, that design be thwarted, then do we look for tribulation in store for you. It is not the fact of your having been pierced with the arrow of conviction, nor of your having throbbed with the hope of heaven, nor of your having tasted in some measure the privileges of God's chosen, which renders you secure from condemnation, should you fail of acting agreeably to the light vouchsafed ; rather, may we gather from God's dealings with Israel, designed as they were to foreshadow His dealings universally with the church, that in your case, as in theirs, " If ye forsake the Lord and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt and consume you, after that He hath done you good."

II. We would pass on to inquire, as proposed, secondly, into the justice of the dealing which is referred to in the threatening before us. The real question at issue would seem to be this—Does the fact of God having shown favour to a nation or an individual, furnish any ground for pronouncing as unjust the subsequent infliction of anger ? Is there that in the experience of good from the Almighty which might lead a person to doubt the justice of the dealing, if subsequently made to reap vengeance ? We will examine this question, first, with reference to Israel ; and then, more generally, with reference to mankind at large.

Now it will be admitted on all hands, that every reason was given Israel to expect the continuance of the Divine favour and protection. The fact of their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, was in itself a warrant to conclude that God designed to exalt them as a nation, and to provide for their constant defence. The people could not have erred in concluding from all which God wrought for them, in calling them out of bondage, and in preserving them in the desert, that He designed to uphold them, and to make them prominent amongst other nations of the earth, as much for temporal greatness as for their vast spiritual privileges ; but it would have been to overlook one most important feature in their case, to neglect the special design of the Almighty in their selection, namely, that He might be glorified in their willing obedience. True, indeed, God intended to bless them ; it was His gracious purpose to shower down upon them unnumbered mercies, but it was as much His intention that the people so signally favoured should present the spectacle of an holy nation, consecrated by profession to the service of the Almighty ; and if this design was altogether frustrated, can it be affirmed there was any injustice about the procedure, which not only withheld the promised blessing, but apportioned a merited curse ? We must be careful not to take a partial or one-sided view of God's dealings with Israel ; we grant you, that the bestowment of favours from the Almighty is in itself a reason to anticipate their continuance, and yet not to expect their continuance irrespective of the end for which they are granted. Now, without pretending to be wise beyond what is written, we think it is easily to be perceived, that one main purpose of the Almighty in the calling of Israel as a nation, was to maintain upon earth, through means of that race, the pure knowledge of Himself ; to afford a witness to the unity of Jehovah, and against idolatry ; to secure glory to Himself by the exhibition, on the part of this people, of a consistent obedience. Surely, then, if this purpose was, through the nation's profligacy and disobedience, altogether thwarted ; if all the resources which God gave them of national strength were abused and corrupted ; if the gifts, which without number and measure, God lavished upon them, were perverted into the instruments for dishonouring His name ; if, in place of presenting a living testimony against idolatry, and on the side of God's truth, they presented the spectacle of a people curtailed by the Almighty's wing and yet revolting from subjection to His authority, brought into near contact with Divinity, and yet preferring to worship false deities, which could neither save nor deliver ; indeed it were strange not to perceive that their conduct in this respect released every presumed obligation "to do them good," and in short vindicates to the letter the justice of the warning, " If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good."

And now, to take a more comprehensive range, from looking at the case of the Jewish people, let us turn to that of mankind in general. Does it appear that

God can be just in the apportionment of unmitigated wrath to mankind, notwithstanding all the manifestations of His determination to do them good? There are two grand exhibitions to be met with of God's merciful intention towards mankind at large, to do them good. The first of these is furnished by creation, and the second by redemption. Our object of inquiry is simply this: whether the display of God's love in creating or redeeming mankind offers any reason to conclude, that in harmony with His justice, he cannot "turn and do them hurt, and consume them."

To begin with creation; no man can doubt that his creation is the proof of a purpose on God's part "to do him good." Beyond all question, man was created to be happy, in a measure, even as God is happy. All his endowments, whether of mind or of body, bespeak this intent of his Maker to provide for his happiness. The faculties wherewith he is entrusted, the world he inhabits, with its many provisions for his well-being, all attest that the Creator designed His creatures' happiness in their formation; and no man can ponder his own frame, so replete with evidence, to the exquisite skill of its Maker, and no man can look forth on the world he inhabits, and be at a loss to know that in his creation God designed to "do him good."

Moreover, we may add further, it is but reasonable to conclude, that what God formed he intended to preserve, and that having made man capable of vast enjoyment, He never designed him to inherit intense anguish. It is a legitimate inference, from observing how God provided for man's well-being at his creation, to gather that God designed his perpetual well-being; and we know besides, there can be no changeableness with the Almighty. He cannot be weary of doing good, nor is He mutable of purpose; and hence arises the question, How can it be harmonised with the manifest purpose of God in creating man, "to do him good," to find man liable to everlasting indignation from the Author of his being? If all the gifts of God in creation proclaim His purpose of mercy, how shall we reconcile the apparent inconsistency of apportioning creatures thus formed to be happy, to a condition of never-ending wretchedness? Again we must refer you to the actual purpose of God in man's creation. Beyond all question, this purpose was man's happiness, but then his happiness was to consist in assimilation to the Godhead; and if upon man devolve the guilt of voluntarily having destroyed and renounced that similitude, where is the inconsistency of the dealing, should God "turn and do him hurt, and consume him?" The nobler the faculties wherewith he was endowed, the brighter the evidence of God's purpose to "do him good," the stronger then seem to me the reasons wherefore wrath should be executed upon those by whom the faculties are abused, and the evidence slighted. There can be no question that when God endowed man with those magnificent properties which attest his pre-eminence to all other created beings, the endowment was conferred in order that it might be employed to set forth the Divine glory. The powers of the intellect, the strength, of the limb, were to be sacred to the service of God. His honour was to be the chief aim of the creature; and such was the constitution of man's nature, that while true to this design of God in his creation, he would never have experienced any interruption to happiness; whereas, the moment he forsook his high calling, to glorify God, by doing His will, he incurred misery through abandoning the source of enjoyment. And are we to think there is any injustice about the procedure, if when the Creator discovered His creatures surrendering themselves to the service of His adversary, employing all the faculties which He gave to be used for His glory, rather for His cruel dishonour, He should then visit with vengeance those whom He had proved Himself so desirous to bless?

Might we not appeal to all the manifestations of God's love in creation, as furnishing a reason for the condemnation of those by whom it is scorned? Yes, by the properties of the body and of the mind; by the strength of muscle, and by the powers of the intellect; the fervour of the affections, and the vigour of the understanding; by all the magnificence and the loveliness of the visible panorama of creation, would we vindicate the justice of the award, which sentences to wrath the despisers of mercy and the abusers of privilege. 'I gave thee strength,' might God say, 'to be employed for My service; I gave thee understanding, to know Me as the Creator and the former of all things. I gave thee an immortal soul, and by those yearnings after futurity which I implanted within thee, I taught thee to aspire after happiness in eternity. I spread out the universe with proofs of My wisdom

and might, in order that from the survey of the heavens above, or the earth beneath, thou mightest come to know My "eternal power and godhead." Thou hast abused thy every faculty; thou hast marred thy understanding; thou hast yielded up thy affections to what cannot satisfy thee; thou hast sepulchred thy true greatness of being, and hast employed every talent which I gave thee in the service of My adversary.' Yea, and upon such testimony as this, we ask, if the justice of the threatening receives not an overwhelming vindication—"If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good."

We turn lastly, to the manifestation of God's goodness, as displayed in redemption. There have been those who have argued—redemption is the evidence of a love so surpassing, they can never believe God will sentence to destruction those whom He has redeemed at such cost. 'The method of our atonement involves an expenditure of such wisdom and mercy, that how can we conceive of the Almighty as permitting its objects finally to perish?' Alas! to reason thus, is equally, as in the former instances we have adduced, to overlook one main purpose of God in the scheme of human redemption. We go every length in the acknowledgment how vast and how unutterable is that love, which moved God to send His own Son to die in our stead, and we believe that love to have been so comprehensive in its outgoings, that there lives not, nor ever has there lived, the human being, whose misery it did not pity, and for whose final salvation it did not provide. If there be one truth more clear to our judgment than another on the page of God's Word, it is this, that Jesus Christ died for all mankind, and that when His blood was shed there was provision made, in virtue whereof the sins of every descendant from Adam may be freely forgiven. We cannot believe that the love of God, which moved Him to devise a way of deliverance for the lost, had respect only to a fraction of humanity; we believe rather, that it was a love which reached to every family, and to each member of every family of the human race; so that there is no man that was excluded from the gracious design.

Moreover, we know how inadequate all language must be to describe, and all thought to conceive the dimensions of this love; it is infinite and incomprehensible, like its Author. Eternity shall be employed in its celebration, and yet its depth and height and length and breadth, will for ever remain unmeasured. And indeed, when you reflect upon a love so vast, expended in such rich profusion upon our race, it does at first view appear strange, that any of those over whom it yearned should ever experience from its Author the infliction of an eternal vengeance. But is it not more strange, that a love so exceeding should fail to excite the gratitude in return of those for whom it was spent? Is it not strange that men who have been made the objects of a sacrifice so costly, should regard it so lightly, and requite it so coldly? We may wonder that redeemed sinners should perish, but is it not more wonderful that redeemed sinners should refuse to be saved?

Again let us advert to the purpose of God in redemption. Indeed it was to bless the whole earth; it was to ransom humanity from the bondage of evil, and to exalt it to transcendent felicity. But after all, throughout every dealing of God with His intelligent creatures, we may discover the purpose to treat them as responsible beings, free to reject the overtures of His mercy. Now, redemption is offered upon certain terms; if there be an error in speaking of them as conditions, we may notwithstanding affirm, that man is required to repent and to believe, in order to be saved. It is no part of redemption to offer him an entrance into heaven irrespective of a moral fitness, to render him meet for heaven's enjoyments; and in the acquisition of this moral fitness man is required to co-operate with the Divine Spirit; he is to strive after holiness, in reliance upon a promised help which shall be given in proportion as it is diligently sought and carefully improved. Man has, at all events, the power to refuse this help; he can resist the suggestion of God's good Spirit, and thereby thwart the purpose of the Almighty, in having redeemed him. He can refuse to profit by what God hath done for him, and thus prove himself a despiser of the love which is so unsearchably great. He can resolutely withstand the design of the Almighty in redemption, namely, that he should glorify God, both in his body and soul; and I ask, if it be possible for Him to act thus, is there not justice in the sentence which awards him to suffer in spite of all the declared willingness of God to do him good? It is in this case, as in creation; the

greatness of the mercy abused vindicates the equity of the punishment; we stay not to *prove* that the despisers of redeeming love will reap in eternity the fierceness of God's wrath; our object is only to show the thorough justice of their punishment. Conclude not then, we say, that because you have been redeemed with such an inestimable price, therefore you cannot become sharers of God's wrath. Redemption, it is true, tells of God's love; it is eloquent of His longing desire to do you good; it has already done much for you, for it is redemption that secures to us all the blessings of creation. And notwithstanding, redemption leaves you under the possibility of incurring a tremendous retribution, should you slight its provisions. It secures all that is needful for your salvation—a title to heaven, founded upon Christ's merits, and the help of a Divine agent, whereby you may be trained for immortality. But oh! it is the sufficiency of redemption which renders so inexcusable its neglect. If it were not ample enough in its provision; if it were not gratuitously offered to all, there would be an excuse for such as derive not benefit from its overtures; whereas, if the sole cause of failure must be wilful unbelief, the rejection of a mercy freely offered, the contempt of a love without parallel, then indeed, we can discern no imaginable injustice about the fulfilment of such a threatening as this—"If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good."

We add no more than a brief sentence, in conclusion. It is our most earnest desire in behalf of each one amongst you, that you should improve each token of God's goodness, as the motive to increased obedience. We have shown you the danger of arguing from the experience of mercies, that judgments are not to be feared, should you go on in rebellion. The experience of goodness at God's hands rather warrants the expectation of unmeasured severity, should the goodness be despised. "Go and sin no more," said Christ to the man whom He had healed of a bodily infirmity, "*lest* a worse thing come unto thee." He had experienced a signal interposition of the Divine favour, but he is warned against committing fresh iniquity, lest after having had "good done to him," he should be more grievously afflicted.

This is what we may tremble for with respect to our country at large; God has been gracious to us, far beyond all our deserts. We poured out a prayer when His chastening was upon us, and He hath not left Himself without witness, in that He has done us good, giving us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. Oh! that we might convert this manifestation of His goodness into the motive for serving Him more faithfully! Alas! there may be a confession of the good vouchsafed, without the surrender of heart to God's service, which the favour experienced ought to produce. Let us see to it, that having mingled to-day, in the service of thanksgiving, we apply ourselves to greater diligence in our calling as Christians. God's judgments are yet abroad in the earth, and those who are observant of what is passing, are not blind to the apprehension of judgments which are visiting other shores, and may visit ours. The pestilence is walking the earth; who can predict that it may not revisit our own land? Who can tell, on the other hand, of what avail individual repentance and devotion to God's service may not be? The nation is but the aggregate of units; if each were to resolve, through God's grace, on amendment of life, there would presently go forth a moral renovation over the whole surface of our country. Let each then here present feel that he has it in his power, by the consecration of himself to the Lord, to act for the best interests of all in the realm. Let each feel there is a responsibility laid upon him to cleave steadfastly unto God, lest by individual apostasy he should swell the amount of national rebellion, and provoke the Almighty to "turn and do us hurt, and consume us, after that he hath done us good."

## GRATITUDE TO GOD FOR ABUNDANT MERCIES.

### A Harvest Thanksgiving Sermon,

BY THE

REV. JOHN EDMUND COX, M.A., F.S.A.

PREACHED IN TRINITY CHURCH, STEPNEY,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 17, 1847.

Being the Day appointed for a General Thanksgiving for the late Abundant Harvest.

*"The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."*—Psalm  
CXXVI. 3.

WE are about to meditate this day, in the conclusion of a special service, which has been arranged with wisdom, judgment, and piety, upon a subject that calls for peculiar consideration, and demands earnest attention. Many months have not passed since we were called together upon a day specially set apart by the same piety, judgment and wisdom, to deprecate the visitation, which our heavenly Father had sent upon us, in withholding the usually abundant fruits of the earth, and to intreat of Him, by fasting and prayer, to vouchsafe a deliverance by granting that the land would again "yield her fruits of increase to His glory and our comfort." It pleased Him to hear our intercessions, and to give ear unto a nation's petition. "He left not Himself," in answer to prayer, "without a witness"—in that "He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and a fruitful season; filling our hearts with food and gladness." The fears which had discouraged many hearts are removed; the panic which the alarm of the continuance of a want of bread had excited, is taken away; and God, whose very judgments are always tempered with mercy, has showed Himself better to us than our fears.

Of the attributes and character of our God many manifestations have been given from time immemorial, which are eminently adapted for the instruction and improvement of His people. We read in His own Word how He not only wonderfully ordained and overruled the most perilous circumstances of His early church, in His purposes of wisdom and lovingkindness, but "how He also fought for Israel." We ourselves, unless blinded by ignorance, and besotted by the darkness of unbelief, have, times out of number, witnessed in our own especial cases, arrangements that were instituted in His infinite wisdom, the design and operation of which have been to illustrate that He is our Saviour and Preserver, no less than our God. And these things He has manifested, notwithstanding the memorials of His love and favour have been neglected and perverted, and we have lived as if every trace of His presence were extinguished, and as though we had been left in the utter wildness and anarchy of our hearts' desires, to follow the vices and the falsehoods, which have branded those who are pronounced as "without hope and without God in the world."

But of all the attributes of the mercy of our God vouchsafed towards us, I question very much, whether we ourselves have ever witnessed more striking or evident proofs of His power and willingness to deliver, than in the withdrawal of famine, and its attendant sister, pestilence, from our shores, by the late liberal bestowal upon us "of the fruits of the earth in their season."

If, then, the special declaration of His displeasure against us because of sin was so marked and palpable, as to call forth the evidences of repentance from almost every member of the entire body of our people, (for, excepting by a very

few, and those the most dissolute of our race, never was a day of humiliation so observed in England as was the appointed fast, of March the twenty-fourth,) surely the deliverance returned in answer to prayer, being equally marked as that of the manifestation of His wrath, calls for, and will be answered to, by thanksgiving, intermingled with prayers for future preservation not only in body, but in soul, and by special supplications offered for the effectual and saving grace, which alone can teach any to look into the plague of their own hearts, to truly repent of their own sins, and to abhor unfeignedly their own corruptions. That we have nationally, and individually received great and palpable benefits no tongue can deny. But if benefits be forgotten, or misapplied, they are worse, far worse, in their eventual and abiding result than calamities that are apprehended or endured. "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope;" but what doth ingratitude work? Let conscience answer for itself; whilst the endeavour is now feebly made, to induce one and all here present, not only with the lip, but with the heart, to respond to the grateful and fervent acknowledgment of the text: "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

#### I. What things have been done for us?

It was prophesied by our Lord and Master, towards the close of His gracious ministry, and within a brief period of the hour when He was to be offered up, as the great sacrifice of atonement for sin, that previously to His second coming, events of extraordinary moment would convulse the world, and manifest such marvels as the earth had never previously seen. With reference to these events one particular declaration can never fail to strike the Christian's mind with anxiety, or to direct him to watch the signs of the times with more than common assiduity. "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."

Now it cannot have failed to strike upon the attention of the thinking men of this generation, that they have lived, and are still living in extraordinary days. Never in the world's history have so many, or so wonderful events been crowded into the same space of time, which have been fraught with equally unusual changes in the conditions of nations, and in the administration of worldly powers. The elder members of this congregation will not need to be reminded of the wars of the close of the last and of the commencement of the present century. If ever men's hearts have failed them for fear, certainly during the last fifty years they have especially done so. We have had wars, frightful devastations, and accumulated sufferings, by rapacity and violence. And although we have been favoured with the blessings of peace for thirty-two years, a period unprecedented in the annals of the world, yet during the whole of this time, and to the present moment, "rumours of wars" have prevailed. They have excited alarm; they have come and gone; they arise and depart, but they have not as yet ceased. And surely we have had an equal proportion of distress amongst the nations, increased and increasing, with perplexity. We have had violent political opposition, induced by the follies and the obstinacy of our rulers; as well as by the madness and infatuation of the people. We have seen, and felt, and now at this very moment are feeling, an unparalleled confusion, and an utter revulsion of the ordinary concerns of life, brought to pass chiefly through the visitation of Providence in a deficient harvest last year; the removal of which we this day have purposed to commemorate. I would not presume to say, that the prophecy of our Lord has had a certain, or even partial fulfilment in the convulsion which Europe and the world has suffered from, and which our own country is now contending against. It may, it may or not be so, and time alone will be the great expositor, whether or no more fearful circumstances are yet to happen, more literally to fulfil the prophecy, and to show that its predictions are accomplished to the full extent of the Lord's designs. But whether it be designed or accidental, there is in the circumstances of the present times no small or fancied correspondence with the terms of this remarkable statement of our Lord. This must, for the present, remain a matter of speculation; and our present duty is more

to give heed to the mercies, which have removed anticipated consequences, and to the gracious interference, which, for the present, at least, have averted the full outpouring of the vials of calamity.

And of all the trials which visit human nature, none can possibly be so severe to bear, as that of famine. We need only to cross the channel, which divides this island from the shores of miserable and unhappy Ireland, to witness some of its awful ravages; where its intensity, though mitigated in a degree, is yet most appalling, and where thousands lack the veriest common necessities of life. The voice of general complaint is there heard alike in the house of comparative affluence, and the hovels through which the rain of heaven beats, and the storm travels pitilessly. The pressure of general distress has stricken there not merely the middle and the lower classes, but is pauperising the few remaining wealthier inhabitants, whom the violence of intestine commotion has not slaughtered, or driven from their homes. A winter and a summer have passed, during which England has nobly done her duty, and endeavoured, by nearly impoverishing herself, to afford them the means of subsistence; but another winter is approaching; nay, is at but come, and the most favourable expectations augur no better prospect as about to result.

It is surely, then, "a great thing" that we have been delivered, and although suffering and distress are at our doors, that the worst, at least, that of famine, is withheld from us. It is "a great thing done" for us, that the bolt of judgment has not again fallen upon us, that it has not visited our own hearths, so that we should have heard the cry of the wife of our bosom, and of our famishing little ones craving for food, and we had none to offer them. It is "a great thing" that the means for bracing up the frame of our bodies, and strengthening them to the exercise of labour, and patience, to withstand the other pressing difficulties of the hour, have not been made to yield to exhaustion, nor to struggle for existence; notwithstanding our sinfulness, notwithstanding that by far the greater proportion of the ruin which is at this moment striking down the most opulent of our commercialists, and laying low many of the most estimable and respectable of families, is the result of the hastening to get rich, by an overreaching desire for gain. It is, I say, "a great thing done for us," that against the coming inclement season, "our garners are filled, affording all manner of store;" and that, at least, the miseries of the last year, are in this respect averted.

But, well will it be for us, to recollect and lay to heart, since these great things have been, and are done for us, the intention with which they have been sent, and with which the present portion of them is continued. Afflictions are never sent upon a people but for the purposes of punishment; their essential object is to lay them low in the dust before the Lord. Scarcely ever, indeed, do we read of war, or famine, or pestilence, in the Word of God, without being led by the intimation of the same unerring Word, to trace them to the sins of the sufferers. I know this is a doctrine which the generality of mankind are opposed to receive; I know, that to assert it is so, is a sure means of bringing down ridicule from some minds upon the individual who states it; for the many imagine, that if a God has created the world, He is far too busy with other matters to condescend to take cognizance either of the affairs of nations, or of individuals. But if the Bible be a revelation of the mind of Deity; if it, be God's own Word, and hold that highest of all authorities, which we claim for it, both from the internal evidence of the truths it records, and from the testimony of ages to its accuracy, then we also know, that nothing cometh of chance, and that the affairs of an universe, no less than the destinies of a world, from a giant's death, to the falling of a hair, are regulated, ordained, and brought to pass by the Lord Most High. That Word asserts, when famine visited the favoured nation of His regard in the time of David, who looked only to secondary causes for its existence for a time, but at length by reason of its continuance, was induced to inquire of the Lord—why was it thus?—that the answer given was—"It is for, or because of, Saul, and his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites." And no sooner was atonement made for national sin, than national affliction was withdrawn. And "whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear," the result of our own late national humiliation was not less marked in its result, than were those to Israel. The nation acknowledged that they had sinned, and suffered the visitation of comparative famine, and the gloomy

anticipations of increasing misery because of their transgression; they humbled themselves before their God, and what has been the result? The earth has teemed with fruitfulness; it has brought forth abundance of "grass for the cattle, and herb for the service of man." Scarcely had a week passed after the cries of the congregations of this land had gone up into the ears of "the Lord of Sabaoth," than the fields put on the appearance of fertility, and gave promise of an abundant and prolific harvest; fears of lateness of season, and of a deficiency of quantity and quality immediately gave way, and we have now to acknowledge, that England has at no season reaped a more abundant harvest, or gathered to her store-houses a greater weight of grain.

Such have been the "great things done for us of the Lord." Who can refuse to acknowledge that this is His doing, and that "it is marvellous in our eyes?" Surely there is not one, who, whilst he is now present in the courts of the Lord's house, to acknowledge this temporal deliverance, will not also be led to the contemplation of higher mercies, even the crowning, consummating, and needful mercies, and with added force, be induced not only to ask—"Who hath done great things for us?" but also to make answer—"It is the Lord,"—"the Lord, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth;" "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But this leads us to inquire—

## II. Who it is that hath done such great things for us?

Whether the deliverance that has been wrought out for us, be considered in a national, domestic, or personal point of view, there are few here, I am convinced, from what I have known of them during the time I dwelt amongst them, who will not recognize, and acknowledge the hand of Him who "doeth as He will in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth;" and confess, that had He not commanded the destroying angel to withhold his avenging hand, inevitable destruction would have ensued.

The present manifestation of mercy is, therefore, calculated to draw our consideration to the contemplation of this great and glorious Being, whom "the heaven of heavens cannot contain," and whose arrangements, instituted in infinite wisdom, illustrate Him, to inferior and dependant beings like ourselves, as not merely the Creator, but the Sovereign of all things.

Material nature, in its varied and wondrous productions, is a sublime record of Him, at whose creative fiat it started into order, strength, and beauty, from the darkness of its primeval chaos. "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His power and Godhead." "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." And sun, and moon, and stars, that deck the vast expanse above us, and every form that breathes and moves in animated life, and within the territory of our globe, and every combination of elements that appears upon the surface, or is embosomed in the centre, are but the proclamations of His power, His wisdom, and His love.

But in the display of the Divine perfections, that which eclipses all the others, is the attribute of mercy,—an attribute especially manifested by the of withdrawal of pain and suffering from a rebellious race; but more especially evidenced and shown by that crowning revelation which has been given of the means, whereby alone man attains redemption, and secures a release from the bondage of his natural depravity,—a revelation in which His glory shines forth in peculiar splendour, and dims into dark shadow every preceeding illustration and fulfilment.

It would not be consistent with the plan of this discourse to enter at length upon the mode of Divine manifestation, which is here presented. The fact is, therefore, but to be repeated, that in Christ Jesus there is the concentration of the attributes of Jehovah, and of the natural and moral perfections of His being, than which nothing can rise superior, or be more impressive; inasmuch as the contemplation of His greatness and glory by faith, is to receive new light and corroboration with the events of time; and is to excite both the admiration and the joy of earth and heaven. Unhappily, in by far the greater major-



rity of instances, whether they be of adversity or of prosperity, it is sad and mournful to think, how the manifestations of Jehovah are neglected and perverted by a fallen and apostate race—a race, treading in a sphere that is lighted up and glowing with the greatness of Deity, as if every trace of His presence were extinguished, and as if they were left in the utter wildness and anarchy of the heart's devices to follow the falsehoods which have branded them as “without God in the world.” Well do we know, (for have not Divine visitations for national sins announced, had nothing else declared it?)—well, I say, do we know, that deep and deadly have been the errors, and that monstrous and fearful have been the departures from Him. How ought those, therefore, to rejoice, who are preserved from participation in such guilt, and who, amidst the wreck of ages, and the crashing conflicts of earth, can yet believe in Him, who is God alone, and feel that it is “the Lord” indeed, “who hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.”

III. Seeing, therefore, who it is, “who hath wrought such great things for us;” what will be the most proper expression of our joy, and the most profitable manifestation of our gratitude?

It is useless to attempt to rejoice for deliverances wrought out, unless the conscience testifies that each manifestation of wrath has been deserved. Unless it is felt that the cause of calamity, no less than the removal of it, comes direct from the hand of Deity, there can be no reason to anticipate the continuance of the one, or the entire removal of the other.

That rejoicings for the blessings of an abundant harvest have not been at present so general, or so distinct, as the mercies thereby diffused unquestionably demand, may, I think, be gathered from the fact, that we are not yet freed from apprehension, and not, at present, entirely delivered from anxiety. Had God been regarded as He ought to have been in His visitation, and the traders in the means of sustenance had a more especial eye to the relief of the many suffering around them; had not self been paramount, and the over anxious desire of self-aggrandizement been so palpable, that none could mistake its operations,—it is problematical, whether the present stagnation of commerce, and the want of confidence in our mercantile transactions would have resulted with such desolating consequences.

One sin of the present day especially is, that of hastening to get wealth. For this everything is made to give way. Honesty of purpose is forgotten; the usual routine habits of business are disregarded; operations, as unusual as they are questionable, are resorted to, from the bare idea, or mention of which our forefathers would have shrunk, and visited him who hazarded them with the opprobrium and disgrace, such unheard-of propositions deserved. But these things have grown into fashion of late years; and the man, who is the greatest adept at overreaching his neighbour,—I will not say defrauding, though it closely approximates to this,—obtains the greatest amount of applause, and is looked upon as a model for imitation, and as a creditable example to follow. That such processes are agreeable to, or in accordance with that Divine principle, which inculcates that man shall love his neighbour as he loves himself, without evasion or equivocation, is palpable to the meanest of unbiased comprehensions. It is totally opposite to the mind and spirit of that God, who, “while we were yet sinners sent His only begotten Son to die for us;” who “while we were yet enemies to Him, and alienated by wicked works;” did not “reward us according to our offences,” but returned the greatest good for the greatest amount of evil that had ever been raised against Him. The plan of Him who made us, was not to cast us off without the offer of a remedy, when we had forfeited all claim to His favour; but “He commanded the light to shine out of darkness, to give light and knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ.” The dealing of mankind being as opposed to this spirit and intention; the practices of daily intercourse between man and man, being as unlike these, His gracious measures of treatment toward His creatures,—as light is opposed to darkness, and Christ to Belial, it follows, as a necessary consequence, that He must abhor the transactions of the times, and abominate the avowed and utter selfishness of human and depraved nature. But whatever God abhors He punishes; whatever He abominates, He visits with retribution. It is a truth which every mind, rightly directed and instructed, must be cognizant of, that what-

ever are our personal sins, they, sooner or later, are "sure to find us out." And as with personal offences, so is it with national transgressions; and the demand of Jehovah, therefore, is,—“Shall I not visit for these things?”

The attributes of mercy which God has displayed, in giving us bread to eat, and raiment wherewith we may be clothed, have not been acknowledged, as yet, in our marts of commerce, or our halls of business. So overwhelmed are men of merchandize with the pressure of the times, and with anxieties for the personal safety of their properties, that they have scarcely thought, or considered where they would have been, had the late harvest been as deficient as that of 1846 was said to have been, and the present distress of panic and crisis been superadded thereto. They are so taken up with the thoughts and attempts at extrication from the miseries, which their own thoughtlessness and sin have brought upon them, that they are not glad, as they ought to be, at the deliverance from famine and pestilence, which the Lord has vouchsafed.

The question then returns, how shall they become so? how shall they manifest their sense of thankfulness and gratitude so as to profit withal? By acknowledging heartily, with the services of this day, that the hand of God has been displayed, and is still visible in the whole matter, and that unless they rise from the trammels, with which sin and self have bound them, and call upon their God, they can expect no permanent benefit, nor lasting amelioration of the circumstances which “make them stagger like drunken men,” and put them to their wit’s end. If they would rejoice with gratitude for deliverances already wrought, and express heartfelt anxiety and desire, manifested by earnest and unceasing prayer, that events may change in their present features, and adversity give place to returning prosperity and plenty, let them strive to crucify self, and to exercise that principle of “love which thinketh”—no less than meditates—“no evil” to their neighbour;—a love, upon which every Christian will strive to act;—a love born of gratitude for deliverances realised, as well as hope for engagements to be fulfilled; the proof of which lieth not in inquiring with the Pharasaic lawyer of old—“Who is my neighbour?” but in obedience to the commandments of God, and in a stedfast determination, through grace, ever to strive to keep them.

If, then, brethren, you are conscious of being, on the whole, actuated by this principle, and of producing this fruit, if repeated mercies stimulate you to increased exertions, if the remembrance of that deliverance we now commemorate, and for which we have offered thanksgiving to the Most High and the experience,—the daily experience, of a far more signal and momentous deliverance, “shall henceforth quicken your exertions in making known, and setting forth the will of God, shall make you more diligent, though not less humble, more active, yet not less watchful, more zealous, yet not less circumspect, more confident in your Saviour, yet not less distrustful of yourselves, more concerned to abound in the fruits of the Spirit, yet not less concerned to remember that all the fruits are His; then, you make this confession in the manner most acceptable to God, and which will be most approved of men;” by which you may take to yourselves the joy implied in the concluding words of the text—“Whereof we are glad.”

But if great and important opportunities be neglected and misapplied; if the Lord’s-day still continue as it now is with very many, a day of business or sinful pleasure; if professing Christians will still bow down, and sacrifice their spiritual interests to the worship of mammon and of self, and thus dishonour God, and hold His interpositions as of no moment or value; the day cannot be far distant, when He will teach us, not by such a lesson as He has lately sent, but by a more fearful visitation, that “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Repentance for national and personal sin; thanksgiving for personal and national deliverances, may yet avert the storm.

Surely, then, brethren, as members of a grateful nation, you will lay to heart the affectionate and impressive warning of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—“Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you;” and further, acknowledge in the words of this morning’s meditation, by evidences of joy tempered with moderation, and of thankfulness, joined with trembling—“The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.”

## GRATITUDE FOR DIVINE BLESSINGS.

### A Harbest Thanksgiving Sermon,

REV. HUGH HUGHES, D.D.

PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, CLERKENWELL,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 17, 1847.

Being the Day appointed for the General Thanksgiving for the late Abundant Harvest.

*"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before His presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations."*—Psalm c.

It has been well observed of the book of Psalms, that while it presents a lively picture of the devotion of ancient saints, it expresses sentiments and feelings, recognized by the experience of the believer in every age of the world. Nothing can exceed these songs of Zion in their adaptation to the various states of the human mind, and the various conditions of human life in all climes and times. They pourtray the broken heart of the penitent transgressor, the bitter tears of the backsliding saint, and the deep gratitude of the pardoned and delivered soul. They furnish affliction with words of comfort, despondency with expressions of hope, and gladness with strains of rapture. They meet the case of the distressed in his adversity, of the prosperous in his affluence, of the poor in his obscurity, and of the monarch on his throne; of a private individual humbled to the dust by reason of sin, or elevated to heaven by feelings of gratitude, of an entire people lying in sackcloth and ashes, on account of national judgments, or acknowledging the loving-kindness of the Lord, on account of national deliverances. Whatever be our condition, they uniformly teach us to acknowledge God in public, as well as in private, and speak to us with the clearest voice, on the duty of assembling in His house, for humiliation in the day of adversity, and for thanksgiving in the season of abundance. As in the hour of darkness and sorrow, they direct us to say, "As for me, I will come into Thy house, in the multitude of Thy mercy; and in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple," so in the time of deliverance and prosperity, they address to us the invitation, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord He is God; it is He that hath made us and not we ourselves: we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations."

Of the reasons for thanking, and publicly praising God, assigned in this well known psalm, the first to be noticed is, the fact that we are the work of His hands. "Know ye that the Lord He is God, it is He that hath made us,

and not we ourselves." The effects of God's creative power, furnish the man of contemplation and piety, with matter for most admiring gratitude, and fill his heart with the liveliest emotions of "wonder, love and praise." He exclaims, like David, "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast made; Lord what is man that Thou art mindful of Him, or the Son of man that Thou visitest Him?" He beholds, like him, the vast expanse of the universe studded with worlds, replete with structures, vastly transcending the stateliest edifices of art, and the most gorgeous palaces of princes. He sees the ruby's blaze, eclipsed by the brilliant lights of the firmament, and the lustre of the diamond, obscured by the glowing fires, and radiant beauties of the starry sky. He looks at the sun, going forth in his strength, diffusing light and fruitfulness far and wide, and filling all things living with comfort and cheerfulness. He regards the moon, walking in milder majesty, and tempering with her genial beams, the realms of darkness. He regards the grateful vicissitudes of day and night, and the agreeable changes thereby produced of labour and repose; the evening dews, and the gracious rains, sent down upon this our inheritance, and refreshing it when weary: the regular returns of summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, all conducing to life's support and happiness. And the result is, unfeigned admiration of the amazing contrivance, and a perpetual inclination, gratefully to exclaim, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all." And if, in contemplating this profusion of creative wealth, there be, on a first view excited in the mind, as in the case of the psalmist, a strong feeling of the insignificance of man, yet when he descends to the contemplation of himself, he finds there another world of wonders, which make a yet greater demand on his gratitude to its most gracious Creator. He considers his own frame, and he finds it full of marvels, the ingenious contrivance of the curious fabric, the remarkable adaptation of every part, to promote the well-being of the whole, the senses forming a communication with the world without, and forming as many avenues of comfort and delight, and the mind within, endowed with faculties of great reach and power, with reason, intelligence, and judgment, with memory to recal the occurrences of the past, with foresight to anticipate the possibilities of the future, with imagination and reflection to penetrate, to arrange and to combine the hidden mysteries of thought and of matter, of heaven and of earth. And, as he thus examines the constitution and working of his body and spirit, he naturally asks, 'What am I? And whence am I? How came I hither? And for what purpose have I been sent? Is it likely that I, thus fearfully and wonderfully made, am doomed to expend my existence on this "bank and shoal of time," to toil with fruitless anxiety and care, on this evanescent scene, and then, after passing a few years, "like a tale that is told," to sink into the silent and dreary abyss of annihilation? Is it possible that I, with such a storehouse of recollections, reflections and aspirations, am destined to plod through this world, for three-score years and ten, or a little longer, often shorter time than that, and then, like a bird of the air, or an ox of the stall, to close my eyes in endless darkness, and to fall into the depth of eternal sleep?' Oh! surely this cannot be. Independently of other proofs, I hear a voice within me, proclaiming that, if I be not wanting to myself, if I prevent not wilfully the design of my being, I am intended, with this same body, purified from the seed of mortality, and rendered indestructible; and with this same spirit, cleansed from the dross of corruption, and made incapable of sinning, to be transplanted to another clime, and to take up my habitation in a more genial scene, where my faculties, which are now only in the bud, shall advance and grow, and ripen, and rise higher and higher in the scale of intelligence and happiness, until they reach the perfect day of meridian brightness and glorious bliss. Sublime and transporting thought! to be the possessor of an existence, that shall extend and improve to eternal ages! How wonderful in wisdom, goodness and might, must be He who constituted me what I am, and created me for such a purpose! How deserving of my grateful regard! How worthy, to engage my

affectionate obedience and delight! I will, therefore, rejoice in the Lord, and call upon all creation to glorify His name, and say, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before His presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God, *it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.*"

The second reason, assigned in this portion of Scripture, for rendering such a homage to God, is the consideration, that we are His subjects, and He our careful Ruler. "We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture." In ancient phraseology, a king is often called the shepherd of the people. It is to the believer a delightful contemplation, that in this sense the Lord Almighty is his shepherd. Wise and good rulers among men, are justly accounted among the most valuable benefactors of their species. When wisdom sits at the helm, and justice holds the balance of retribution, and a considerate mind uses power in defence of the weak, oppression is checked, liberty is secured, innocence is protected, universal order prevails, and peace and happiness diffuse their benignant influence through a smiling land. At the thought of such an authority, every countenance brightens with complacency, every bosom glows with gratitude, and every heart exults with joy. Now the man of faith beholds at the head of universal nature One who is matchless in wisdom, unrivalled in power, incomparable in benevolence—One who has established the best laws, for the regulation of His dominions, and armed those laws with a power to reach the heart and the reins, as well as the uttered words and the visible deeds, and executes those laws in the way to confer the greatest measure of happiness on His obedient subjects. And, therefore, though he may be surrounded with difficulties, and menaced with dangers, his heart is not troubled, neither is it afraid, but fixed in calm composure, trusting in the Lord. Sometimes we may behold terrible things in the convulsions of nature, in the battle of the elements, in the withered productions of the earth, in the condition of nations or communities, and we are driven to exclaim with perplexity and dread, concerning the operations of the Almighty Sovereign—"How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" But we no sooner return to sober reflection, than the cloud of dependency is dispelled. And the thought of one, whose power extends over the entire universe, and is, we are sure, ever employed for ultimate good, like the orient sun, dispersing the shades of night, chases away the gloom of doubt and apprehension, and fills the believing heart with confidence and joy. Sometimes we may hear of "wars and rumours of wars," of thrones tottering and kingdoms falling, and of nations raging and dashing together, like the waves of the tumultuous ocean, but "the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." Sometimes intestine tumults may threaten us with anarchy and confusion, and secret enemies may plan the destruction of our domestic peace. But it is a comfort to remember, that we are not at the disposal of our fellow-mortals, and that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men." Nor is any thing connected with our individual welfare, beneath His minute superintendence, or beyond His powerful controul. The diseases which affect our bodies, the troubles which affect our minds, the misfortunes which affect our condition, the flames which lay houses in ruins, the storms which bury treasures in the deep, "the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the arrow that flieth at noon day"—are all servants which await His sovereign pleasure, and of which He can say "to one, Go and it goeth, and to another, Come, and it cometh." And being assured by His unfailing Word, that He will make "all things to work together for good to them that love Him," we may possess our souls in patience, nay, cheerfulness, through all the chances of our earthly pilgrimage, yea, greatly rejoice at the thought that "we are His people and the sheep of His pasture."

We have next set before us, the goodness and mercy and veracity of God, as emphatically demanding the public expression of our gratitude. "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving: and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations." Of the goodness of God

we sought to set before you several instances, when last winter we appealed to you, in behalf of a distressed and starving people; we then endeavoured to make it clearly appear from the operations of nature, the records of history, the dispensations of providence, and the testimonies of inspiration, how manifestly the goodness of God predominates over the severity He exercises towards the children of men. And now we will content ourselves on that head, with asking you whether in your own case, the loving-kindness of the Lord, has not been far more remarkable than His wrath. You have, perhaps, sustained many losses and disappointments. But have they not been trifling, compared with the possessions that are left, the objects you have attained, and the prosperity you still enjoy? You have, perhaps, had to lament many bereavements; but have they not been few, when you count the comforts which remain? You have lost a father or a mother; but have you not sons and daughters still living? You mourn the death of a brother or a sister; but have you not many other dear relatives to console your hearts? Pain and grief, sickness of body and distress of mind, may have paid you their unwelcome visits; but have they not been "few and far between," when you look back on the long succession of health and strength and mental tranquility you have enjoyed? And say whether, on the retrospect of all the past, you have not abundant reason to declare that "the Lord is good?" There is not one true Christian now before me, who will not respond in heart to this part of the text. Even though you may on many occasions have found this world a vale of tears, and you have been afflicted and distressed in various ways, and days of care and nights of weariness have been appointed unto you, with sad misfortunes and heart-breaking bereavements in their train, yet when you balance against these the many blessings and privileges, the many years of prosperity, of exemption from pain and grief, which have been allotted unto you, you will feel compelled to acknowledge the loving-kindness of the Lord, nor will it be with reluctance, but with delight, that you will take every opportunity of answering the psalmist's call, for the public expression of your gratitude: "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good."

But the next consideration named by the psalmist demands yet deeper emotions of gratitude, and louder songs of praise. "His mercy is everlasting." There is a notable difference between the quality of goodness and the quality of mercy. The mercy of God is an attribute which has for its objects, fallen and sinful creatures. It is not needed by those angelic intelligences who have preserved their integrity, the life and happiness they enjoy being emanations of Divine goodness, rather than of Divine mercy; neither was it needed by man among the bowers and groves of paradise, the life and happiness which he enjoyed being also emanations of Divine goodness rather than of Divine mercy. As long as he continued in innocence, he was happy, and therefore needed not mercy, mercy being required only by the miserable. But when he fell, and by wilful disobedience insulted a most gracious Benefactor he forfeited all the blessings with which he was surrounded, and subjected himself to perpetual destitution and suffering, as the penalty of his transgression. Then he came to be greatly in need of mercy, and it was through mercy alone that he was permitted to live one moment after he had departed from God. But God not only sent him a short reprieve just for the purpose of giving him time for repentance, He continued to him many of the blessings he possessed before his fall. Instead of striking his mind with helpless idiocy, He continued to him the use of His rational faculties, the powers of memory, foresight, judgment, reflection. Instead of blasting his body with incurable weakness, He continued to him the health and strength requisite to till the ground and to obtain the means of subsistence. Instead of condemning him to the unsatisfied cravings of hunger and thirst, He caused the earth to respond to his labours, and to supply him with corn and oil and wine. The continuation of blessings like these, to one who had justly deserved to lose them all, was a pure act of unspeakable mercy. Had he not offended his Creator, they would have been the mere, though most thankworthy emana-

tions of Divine goodness, delighting to scatter benefits with a liberal hand, and rejoicing in the wide diffusion of happiness. But when he had destroyed the work which God pronounced "very good," and defaced his soul by the pollution of sin, it was nothing but pure compassion that vouchsafed to him any of those possessions, which make life comfortable or existence endurable. And what is it but pure compassion that vouchsafes to us his descendants, who are in the same condemnation, such blessings at the present day? Think of your being by nature enemies to God, and perversely bent upon offending Him by wicked works. Think of the numberless ways, in which you have offended Him by thought, by word, by deed; by the follies of your youth, by the multiplied iniquities of your maturer age; by individual wickedness, by national transgression. Think how often He has knocked at the door of your hearts, and you have denied Him admission; how often He has called you to repentance and you have refused to hear; and how long He has stretched out His hand with the offers of heavenly favours, and you have not regarded Him. When you think of such inexcusable perverseness, such miserable indifference, such deep provocations, and you yet find yourselves in the land of the living and in the place of hope, and that instead of being desolate and destitute of all comfortable subsistence, you are surrounded with many blessings, health and strength, food and raiment, domestic enjoyments, and national advantages, you cannot restrain the out-burstings of gratitude, to Him whose mercy is thus found to "endure for ever," and you cannot but feel the entire reasonableness of the exhortation—"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name. For His mercy is everlasting."

One other and very forcible consideration is added in this portion of Scripture, as an inducement to the acknowledging of God; it is, that "His truth endureth to all generations."

We will apply this position to only one truth of God at present—that truth of revelation which assures us of His constant superintendence of the world we inhabit. God's Word declares, that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men;" and we maintain that this declaration is not less true now than when it was uttered in the ears of Nebuchadnezzar. God's Word declares, that it is He who "causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, and that all things "living wait upon Him to receive their meat in due season;" and we aver, that these words are as significant now as when they came from the lips of the psalmist; yea, that the truth asserted in them "endureth to all generations." And when it is found that, through carelessness or infidelity, men act as if they were meaningless or false, and avowedly or practically deny God's interference in the affairs of nations or the operations of nature, He gives contradiction to the folly by sending forth "His judgments on the earth," and so makes "the inhabitants of the world to learn righteousness." When Pharaoh, for example, set Jehovah at defiance, he and his kingdom were chastised with dreadful scourges. When Nebuchadnezzar forgot Him, by ascribing to his own skill and prowess the power and possessions which Heaven had bestowed, he was reduced to have his dwelling with the beasts of the field. When Sennacherib insulted Him, in the confidence of conducting a countless and invincible army, on the morrow all his hosts were found to be dead men. When David grievously sinned against the Lord by numbering the people, a pestilence descended upon his kingdom, and carried away seventy thousand of his subjects. When Israel as a nation apostatized from the worship of their fathers, "the palmerworm, and the locust, and the cankerworm, and the caterpillar," like a great army, came and devoured the fruits of the earth, and changed the land that flowed with milk and honey into a dreary and desolate wilderness. We are quite sure that God still continues, as of old, to follow national sins by national sufferings. If a people, like our own, will be so forgetful of the providence of the Most High as to refer all their acquisitions and advantages to their own skill and industry—if they will so "make haste to be rich," as if wealth were the one thing needful, and so "set their affections on things below," as if the "things above" were a fable

or a dream, why, then, let them look for reverses that shall cause their "riches to make themselves wings and fly away," and leave them in the slough of disappointment and despair. And if we hear of a part of our kingdom where the poor have been shamefully neglected by the rich, as if property had been given to men for their own exclusive gratification, without reference to its disposal according to the will of God, whose is the "earth and the fulness thereof," and, accordingly, without regard to the comforts, or even the subsistence, of those through whose toil the earth is made to yield her increase—if the wretched tillers of the ground, through whatever causes, are found to perpetrate murders in broad day-light, and, instead of being detected, are even shielded by their neighbours from the hand of the avenger of blood, then let men look for uncommon afflictions and extraordinary calamities. We would not, however, be understood as passing judgment on particular cases, either of a nation or of individuals. And there may be reason to fear, not merely the imputation, but the reality of presumption, in treading on these mysterious grounds; but we cannot be wrong in declaring that there is a connection, though we may not be able exactly to trace it out, between a nation's wickedness and Heaven's temporal displeasure. God has declared it, with regard to the nations of old; and we know that what He has once declared relative to mankind will for ever stand fast, and be found applicable in every age; for "His truth endureth to all generations."

But we discover a more cheering view of the position, that "His truth endureth to all generations," in the connection noticeable between humiliation for sin and deliverance from punishment. Of this connection we have many striking illustrations in the inspired records. Even the proud king of Egypt, against whom the cries of oppressed Israel rose up to Heaven, no sooner repented of his obstinacy and entreated the forbearance of Heaven, than the plague which afflicted his realm was removed. Even the idolatrous and murderous Ahab no sooner "rent his clothes, and put sackcloth on his flesh, and fasted, and went softly, and humbled himself before the Lord," under the terror of impending wrath, than Elijah was commissioned to tell him that God would not bring on the threatened evil in his days. Who can forget the memorable effects of seasonable repentance in the case of the Ninevites, when menaced with destruction? When "they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them, and cried mightily unto God" in deprecation of His deserved and fearful wrath, "God saw their works that they turned from their evil ways; and God repented of the evil that He had said He would do unto them, and He did it not." "Gather the people," said the prophet Joel, when his country was threatened with ruin through war and famine, "sanctify the congregation. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach." And what was the consequence? Deliverance and joy of heart; so that the same prophet who had preached repentance to the people, encouraged them to strains of triumphant exultation, saying, "Be glad, then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God; for He hath given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fets shall overflow with wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, My great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you." And does not our own experience at this moment—to say nothing of past deliverances after previous humiliations—bear testimony to the connection between national contrition and national restoration? and have we not abundant reason to avail ourselves of this day, especially and most properly appointed as a day of thanksgiving, to emphatically "praise the name of the Lord our God, that hath dealt wondrously with us?" If clouds and darkness have for awhile brooded over our land—if the Lord has seemed to stretch forth His hand in judgment—if He has



visited a part of our population with the famine and the pestilence, giving, as it were, "their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust"—if we have had reason to fear that the tide of devastation might reach our own neighbourhoods, and even make our own habitations desolate—and if, then, upon our "humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God," "with fasting, and with weeping and with mourning," we have found the storm clearing away, the earth bringing forth plentifully, "the floors to be full of wheat," and the trees to be bending with fruit, and meat to be given abundantly, so that all may eat and be satisfied, and there is exchanged unto us "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness"—oh ! If God has thus dealt bountifully with us, who might ere while well be afraid of destitution and want, who shall not perceive that He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," "forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin" to the broken heart and contrite spirit, and feel towards Him the deepest gratitude at once for His gracious acts and gracious revelations, and echo with heart and soul the sentiments of the words, "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise : be thankful unto Him, and bless His name ; for His truth endureth to all generations."

Great, and good, and merciful God ! we rejoice in the belief of Thy existence. We rejoice in the belief of Thy providence. "We bless Thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life," especially for our deliverance this year from the evils of which we were afraid, "but above all for the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory" hereafter. We esteem it our indispensable duty to worship Thee "in spirit and in truth." We look up to Thee with all the consolation of the assurance, that Thou art a faithful Guardian, an unchanging Friend, and a munificent "rewarder of them that diligently seek Thee." And I trust that there is not one among us—would there were not one in the nation !—that is not filled with the spirit of the psalm which we have already sung, and now discoursed on, and will not be ever ready in heart to say—"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness : come before His presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord He is God : it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves ; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise : be thankful unto Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good ; His mercy is everlasting ; and His truth endureth to all generations."

It appears from the Queen's Letter, already read in your hearing, that much distress still prevails among our fellow-subjects in distant parts of the kingdom, towards the relief of which you are requested to contribute according to your several abilities.

## THE END OF THE LORD.

### A Harvest Thanksgiving Sermon,

BY THE

REV. JOHN HUTTON CROWDER, M.A.

PREACHED IN ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, BLOOMSBURY,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 17, 1847.

Being the Day appointed for the General Thanksgiving for the late abundant Harvest.

*"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."*  
—Romans viii. 28.

MEN and brethren, a solemn theme befits a solemn occasion. We have to-day blessed our God for signally answering prayer in averting the threatened curse of prolonged famine, and in restoring fruitfulness to our land. The consideration, in connexion herewith, of "the end of the Lord" in those darker dispensations, which wear the outward appearance of evil, hath seemed to me likely, by God's blessing, to tend to edification, and to the abounding of your liberality towards those for whom, in obedience to the Royal command, I shall ask your contributions at the close of this discourse.

In this epistle Paul has been hitherto a traveller, toiling up the hill of a demonstration how utterly lost is man, and how freely gracious is God in Christ Jesus. And just as a traveller, having reached some commanding height, turns round to delight himself in contemplating the difficulties surmounted, and the way passed over, so in this eighth chapter is the holy man of God moved to turn round, and expatiate over the glorious and lovely things through which the Spirit has led him in the preceding seven. "No more condemnation," nor slavery, nor fear, for the spiritual ones, who "are in Christ Jesus." Moreover, no anxious disquietude concerning the terrible scenes and events around them. "Though the waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof, God is in the midst of them, they shall not be moved." There is nothing wonderful in this fixed state of mind, if only you fancy a man realizing the things which the Bible reveals. Let faith be to you "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" yourself a sinner undeserving of any thing in the shape of mercy, and God a Father who "has freely given you all things," and the presence and prevalence of evil will in no wise shake you. He has solved the difficulty of your salvation, and will solve all others. May you, dear brethren, assent to this sublime truth of the text, by being yourselves embraced in the fold of those who love God—"the called according to His purpose."

First, I wish to make one or two general remarks on the Spirit's affirmation, that "all things work together for good to them that love God." It is true, even though the saints may at times doubt it; because, happily for them, the purpose of their God to save them is not dependent on their fluctuations of feeling. However, both Paul and his believing fellow-sufferers did feel its consolation, and afford thereby great confirmation to the outward evidences of the Gospel, if indeed any such were needed. In prosperity, and ease, and security, it is easy to say that "all things work together for good," as well as to bless God that they do; but what shall we say of dark adversity, unrelieved, as far as earthly comfort was concerned, by a single star? Something more was required than a mere human motive or impulse, to make a man say, This too works for good. But Paul said it, and felt it. "All things," sweet and bitter—the delightful communings with a reconciled Father—the fellowship of the saints—the indwelling of the strength-imparting Spirit, as well as the stoning at Lystra, the gaol at Philippi, the conspiracy at Jerusalem, the beasts at Ephesus, the martyr's axe at Rome—"none of these things move me." "All work together for good;" namely, for the presence of his Lord, and "the crown of righteousness," which in his eyes swallowed up all intervening horrors, and made them as though they were not.

Brethren, the root of this apostolic confidence consists in believing that fact which was so often a consolation to David: "The Lord reigneth." It is practically much forgotten, however admitted in words. In the case of earthly monarchies you see that kings act on people through the co-ordinate authority and by the means of cabinets and parliaments, not independently; and such examples influence, insensibly perhaps, our judgment of God's actings, who is most despotic, and only condescends to use second causes, and that, not as sharers in His dominion, but only as instruments in His mighty hand. Christians who forget this, deprive themselves of the great happiness of feeling that God orders whatever happens, that it could not happen otherwise, and that it is best that it should happen as it does. The objection drawn from the evil nature of much which happens, is conclusively answered by our utter ignorance of even the simplest parts of God's stupendous machinery. One ingredient in a prescription may be poisonous, taken alone, but conduce to health when mixed up with others: even so the elements of the Divine administration are not to be judged of singly, but each in its relation to the others, and to the whole. "All things work"—not in an isolated, disconnected way, but "together," and with a bearing on certain ends. In order to pronounce a judgment on the character of the things, you must consider ends as well as means. The child of God does this, and is satisfied; "acquainted with God, he is at peace." Nay, if he supposed himself capable of understanding his mighty Father's ways, half his reverence would cease. On the contrary, he loves to feel himself under the guidance of One immeasurably his superior; of an infallible Teacher, in respect of his own ignorance; an invincible Defender, in respect of his own weakness. 'My Father is omnipotent, omniscient, all-wise, all good: His goodness directs His power aright: this I know, but as yet cannot expect to know *how*. No matter; I *shall* know. At present, it is enough to "know that all things work together for good to me, if I love God."

And now, let "wisdom be justified of her children" by separate instances. *Temptation* works for good. It is Satan's power brought to bear upon the soul. In the abstract, this is a fearful thing, and our exposure to such an encounter might seem to be at disadvantage. But see how the Lord allows it for the purpose of disciplining the spiritual recruits, who, if "faithful unto death," shall "receive the crown of everlasting life;" qualifying the permission which Satan has to tempt, by the promise given to the tempted: "I will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." There is no disadvantage here, unless we choose to make it. Moreover, heaven is a most holy place, and man is most unholy. His character must change to suit it, and not it to suit his character, if he can ever enter there, or find pleasure therein. Life, then, in its trying and tempting circumstances, is the very thing fitted to rub off the rust of self-confidence, and to rinse the soul, as a vessel, for the new wine of the kingdom. Christian soldier, God exposes you to enemies, but gives you in the sixth chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, your invulnerable armour. Security bought by victory is far nobler than security which results as a matter of course. Therefore, in the hour of temptation, "consider Him" who was "tempted in all points like as we are," and overcame. Let the triumph of the end smooth the roughness of the means; and know, that if that thing, temptation, has been instrumental in conforming you in one feature to the image of Jesus, it has "worked for good."

Take *affliction* too, under all its visitations. Sorrowing children, who have that load to bear, fall back also upon the strong refuge of your Father's character, and say any thing of what has befallen you than that "God has forgotten to be gracious." I know, indeed, that no mere exhortation or condolence can blunt the sharp stroke wherewith reverse or bereavement, especially if very sudden, wounds the soul. There are few believers of the unclouded faith and resignation which lead them at once, and without a murmur, to prostrate themselves before the throne, bidding His will be done who sitteth upon it. Darkness must be felt; bodily pain, for example, or disappointment, or long-deplored vacancies made by the solemn angel in the cheerful homes. Still, feeling need not be bitter, in the sense of murmuring. "Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him!" Even so, at the hour when you are most sure that your visitations are medicine administered by the best Physician to your sickly soul, the tear may fall,

the sigh be heaved; ah, yes! and the truth of my text be yet felt all the stronger—all the deeper. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby." "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth:" God loves you, believers in His Son: you know it, and, being inspired by the chastisement to love Him the better, you too can say that chastisement has "worked for good to them that love God."

But these words are true of wider and more general visitations. "All things" are wrought for the good of the church. "The closest of all bonds unites the throne and aristocracy of Heaven. In His various and often complicated dealings with men at large, the Lord designs and promotes the good of the church; He works "for the elect's sake." Wars, famines, pestilences; heresies, strifes, divisions; events which at times suggest doubts whether light or darkness shall prevail, are rather as the hand-writing on the wall, meant to inspire godly fear, to confirm what Scripture says of sin's cursed nature, and of God's wrath against it; and to prepare the wise virgins for the approach of that day, of which these signs are heralds instead of contradictions. And again: the Lord shows mercy to the world for the sake of those who love Him. There be many Obededoms, whose houses are blessed because of the ark of God; many a crew, apparently doomed to shipwreck, given unto some fellow voyager Paul; many cities, against which wrath hath gone forth, spared "for the ten righteous that are therein." And all these good results, whose influence is immediate on others, act by a reflex operation on them for whose sake they are brought about, that is, "for good unto them who love God."

Then, dear brethren, the text may be confirmed by example also, following the same order of individual and general cases. When Abraham was called to offer up his beloved and only son, God tempted Abraham; and who can tell the pangs of his paternal heart during those three days of dark anguish? The reason of his trial was to prove his title to the name, "father of the faithful." And thus he endured, not giving ear to any plausible objection which might have been urged against the righteousness of God—and the end was good. When Jacob saw his youngest son torn from him to appease, as he thought, the wrath of a fierce tyrant in Egypt, he groaned out, "All these things are against me." The sun soon came forth; soon he heard of the dead alive again, the lost found, himself advanced to honour; and the end was good. Job loved God, but with a certain admixture of self-righteous notions, which God selected most tremendous instruments to weed out of his heart. Look at the man of affliction, in disease and ashes; houses, lands, friends, children, gone; who could foresee good from this? Yet it came. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy;" and even in his case, the end was good. So must we "rejoice greatly, though now for a season, if need be, we are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of our faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ;" and that end is good.

And the same truth is exhibited in wider examples. The oppression of Israel in Egypt served both to try them, and to work out for them that deliverance from the house of bondage, which is God's pattern of the church's deliverances to the end of time. The persecutions of the Jews under Antiochus, or of Christian saints afterwards, only tended to confirm their faith unto beholders, to brighten their own graces, and dismiss them to glory in chariots of fire. "All things worked together for good." Pharaoh persecutes Israel; she multiplies the more. Nero, or Decius, or Dioclesian, the church; she multiplies the more. And many a spiritual hero in after times might say what Paul said, "The things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel." (Phil. i. 12.) The mighty of the earth are wielded by God at His pleasure. Harken how He addresses one of them in the fifth verse of the tenth chapter of Isaiah: "O Assyrian, the rod of Mine anger, and the staff in their hand is Mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of My wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and

to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few." "Prophets and evangelists are pens in the Lord's hand to teach the nations; and such majestic malefactors are whips in His hand to lash the nations, (and why not famine, or fever, or cholera?) "Howbeit they mean not so." Neither Pilate, Herod, or the Jews *meant* to fulfil God's word, and to seal their own folly, in every insult heaped on Jesus, every nail driven into His hands and feet; ay, in the very gall and vinegar which they gave Him to drink. "All things worked together for good" doubtless; but no thanks to them. "He that dwelleth in the heavens hath laughed, the Lord hath had them in derision."

And now, men and brethren, learn from this subject not to be dismayed at evil signs or events. We had to confront such at the opening of the present year, namely, two of that destructive trinity with which God smites nations—"the famine, the pestilence, and the sword." In such seasons, opportunity is afforded unto the rich and poor to cultivate two graces in which both are deficient. The rich should enlarge their sympathetic liberality towards their brethren, on whom the evil most directly presses; the poor should hear, in the calamity, a call to put entire confidence in Him, who hath sworn that at least daily bread shall be given to those who do. The existence of such confidence, and of wide-spread and yet discriminating benevolence, would be (I hope, in many cases, has been) a blessed instance of God using human means to prove himself faithful and true, and producing a conviction in both orders of men, that if increase in any Christian grace be good, this evil hath worked it. Therefore, for the future woes, if any such must needs come, "let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

But we are met to-day under more cheering circumstances, namely, to bless and praise God for having turned "scarcity and dearth into cheapness and plenty," by "preserving unto us the kindly fruits of the earth;" and we, the inhabitants of the earth, do at least profess by this service our desire to yield *our* kindly fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. O godless, unconverted sinners, your souls have suffered from famine much longer than the ground. If God's out-stretched curse upon the last lead one of you to mourn over the first, happy are you! for then you will go on to prove the Lord, who hath told you to do so, and to "see whether He will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Therefore, while we deem it a joyful and pleasant thing to be thankful for this temporal mercy, we must pray that the Spirit may not suffer its impressions to fade away, but that He may work in us lasting, yea, everlasting, profit. And though you may not understand the connexion between such judgments and our text *now*, be sure of this, my brother, that, if you ever stand in heaven crowned and robed, as one who loves God, and can say then that God's judgments on the earth were his first instruments to make you see and adore His finger, that the cloudy and dark day of famine was used to let Divine light into your soul, you will say that it worked for *your* good, and who can tell to the good of how many more!

I have now, in conclusion, merely to ask your contributions to the object selected for that purpose, namely the relief of those in our sister-countries who are still suffering from the effects of the past winter. "Let every man do according as he is disposed in his heart, not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver." And you, Christian souls, unto whom "all things work together for good," come, and conclude the solemnity of this morning at your Master's table. Present unto Him there yourselves, as the best sacrifice, crowning "the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving." These are the interviews which will give you most of heaven on earth, and enable you to say of judgment as well as mercy, "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints!"

GOD, THE GIVER OF GOOD.

## A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. JOHN HORTON.

PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF ST. GEORGE THE MARTYR, SOUTHWARK,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 24, 1847.

*"Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good."*—Psalm lxxxv. 12.

THIS psalm, my brethren, was penned after the return of the Israelites from Babylon, and while they were still remaining under some severe tokens of God's displeasure. For, though the covenant which Jehovah has made with His believing people,—and when I speak of His believing people, I mean the people of God in all ages and all generations, from the beginning of time, down to the final consummation of all things; I believe that God loved but one church, and that the Son redeemed but one church, and that the Holy Spirit of our God sanctifies but one church; all the true Israel of God, from first to last, have been, and are, and will be but one church;—now although the covenant, which God has made with this church, is so surely made in all things, being confirmed by an oath, in order that we poor, timid, unbelieving children "might have strong consolation," and though that covenant effectually insures that God will not forsake His believing people, yet He will "visit their offences with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes."

And, my brethren, we have a proof of this in the passage connected with our text. The Israelites had returned from Babylon, but they had not rendered that tribute to a gracious God, which the unspeakable mercies they had received from His hands called for from them; and therefore, they were subject to His chastisement at this time.

But as the welfare of God's believing people always lay very near to David's heart, he penned this eighty-fifth Psalm for the use of the great congregation.

The church at this time was in a deluge; the waters were below it, and the clouds were above it; everything, in all directions, was dark and dismal. But the dove is sent forth in prayer; and in the eighth and following verses, you find the dove returning again to the ark, thus beaten about amidst the billows, with an olive branch of peace and good tidings. So you need not despair. Your little bark may be in perils, perhaps at this time, upon the boisterous waves of some unknown trouble, at least unknown to others; they may be pressing very hard upon you on all sides. But send forth a dove in prayer; send it forth out of the ark; and although it may be many days before it returns, you will find it at last coming with the olive branch of peace in its mouth.

Here it is, in the eighth verse: "I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints." I am sure it puts to shame the faith, or rather, the want of faith, of many Christians in the final dispensation of the Gospel, to observe the full assurance and strong language which the Old Testament saints were always in the habit of using.

Now, if we were to put this former part of the twelfth verse into the hands of most of our congregations, they could not use it; they must interpolate, there must be some words in a parenthesis to suit their minds, they would not say, "yea, the Lord shall give that which is good"—they would say, 'we trust He will; our hopes are in Him, that He will give that which is good.' But, my brethren, the Old Testament saints did honor to the faithfulness of the

covenant ; the Old Testament saints knew the truth of these words, that "heaven and earth shall pass away, but God's Word shall not pass away ;" and as He had promised never to leave His people and never to forsake them, the church took up the strong, assuring language, "Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good."

Let us, then, consider, in the first place, the declaration ; secondly, the exercise of faith in the declaration ; and then, thirdly, the inferences to be drawn therefrom.

I. We will, first, examine the declaration itself. "The Lord shall give that which is good."

And we may remark, that He will do this in two ways ; He will "give that which is good" in the dispensation of grace, and He will "give that which is good" in the course of His providence. So you have just summarily to look at the two large departments of God's work, the department of His grace and the department of His providence, and in both you will see the declaration verified, that "the Lord gives that which is good."

Now we remark, first, that God "gives that which is good" in the dispensations of His grace.

And here, my brethren, shall I repeat—yes, I will repeat it, because it will delight your souls to hear it a thousand times,—you whose hearts have been softened to adopt, and embrace, and live upon the doctrines of grace—I will repeat that all that pertains to salvation is a gift, and that man can have nothing of salvation, unless he take it as a gift. God gives first to man, before man gives anything to God. "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, cometh down from above ;" and everything, that He sees to be good for us, He will give.

But the dispensations of grace are not always seen to be good. Let us imagine the case—(and it is by no means an unfrequent one, yea, I would trust it is the case of some in this sanctuary to-day)—the case of an awakened sinner ; an individual, who has but just had the operation performed upon his spiritual vision of having his eyes opened ; who has been blind from his birth, but now a wondrous change hath passed upon him ; "old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new"—his eyes are now opened to perceive something, which he never saw before.

And among the objects, which are thus brought to view, I believe the very first, upon which his eyes look when they are opened, is his own desperate vileness, wickedness, and abomination in the sight of God. He finds himself, as it were, at the foot of Mount Sinai. It is not at the foot of Calvary, that a man first opens his eyes ; no, your eyes, if they are opened at all, were opened at the foot of Sinai, and the first thing you saw was its lightning, and the first thing you heard was its thunder, rolling peal upon peal upon conscience, to show that God hates sin with an utter hatred, while He loves and saves the individual, who is brought to confess and forsake it.

But, the individual sees only at first, Sinai ; hence his false peace has been broken ; he feels himself a ruined sinner,—evil, only evil, and that continually. Now he does not feel all this view of himself to be good ; he cannot call this conviction of sin good. Ah ! he knows not, that that is the beginning of God's work in his soul, and God's work must be a good work—God is only giving him that which is good. It is essential to his enjoyment of any blessing in after experience, that he should have this first—this strong conviction of sin. And let me assure you, that unless you have been kept for some time round Sinai, seeing nothing but ruin and wretchedness staring you in the face, you never will embrace, you never will enjoy, as you ought, the glorious discovery of an ample remedy provided upon Mount Calvary.

Just in proportion to your conviction of sin, will be your sense of the need of a Saviour, and the gratitude you will feel for the Saviour provided. For after having, in His good and wise arrangement, kept you at Mount Sinai, showing you the unbending rigour of His law and your own shortcomings, then He leads you from that terrific mountain along a path—very often a dark one, nevertheless a safe one, because you are led by Him, through the dark valley of humiliation, (sometimes it is a long journey, longer to others than it is to some,) bringing you then unto Mount Calvary, and there you are shown, that the demands, which the stern Lawgiver makes upon the one mountain,

are all answered by the Lawkeeper upon the other ; and you see that every demand is satisfied, that all the penalty which the one inflicts the other is enduring ; all the precepts which the one commanded the other obeyed. Then it is that you see a Saviour suited to your necessities, quite adapted to meet your case in all its points, quite the Saviour you need. You know that spiritually you are insolvent ; but, you find in Him unsearchable riches. You know that you are ignorant ; you find in Christ infinite wisdom. You know that your "righteousness is as filthy rags ;" and it is from Him that you get that garment of righteousness, that robe of justification, which is "unto all and upon all them that believe."

Then again, all the graces of God's Spirit, which follow in the train, are gifts, and are good gifts. Now if you have ever asked for any of these, I undertake to declare to you, that you had them. You will say, if I have them, they are at present so small that they are but as a mustard seed ; well, "the kingdom of God is likened unto a mustard seed, which, though the smallest of all seeds, yet grows up into the tree, and becomes the largest of all herbs ;" and though thy beginning be small, thy latter end shall greatly increase. God begins, and God will proceed with the work. "He will never leave you nor forsake you," till He has brought you perfect unto Himself in everlasting glory. Then these remarks shall suffice under this first thought—that God, gives all that is good, in the dispensations of grace.

Our next remark is, that God will give what is good in the course of His providence ; and that He will give nothing but that which is good in the course of His providence. 'Ah !' say you, 'I am not prepared on the instant, to concede my approval of this statement ; I am at the present time receiving a great cross from the hands of my heavenly Father, and I cannot call it a good thing.' No, you may not call it a good thing ; but your thoughts are not as God's thoughts. He calls it good ; and when you can see all the reasons of His dispensations towards you—when, from the high battlements of heaven, the everlasting city, you often look back upon all the way which the Lord hath led you through your pilgrimage on earth ; you will be ready to say with overflowing gratitude—It was a right way, it was a good way, by which we were brought to this city of habitation. I believe, that some of the best things, which the people of God have received, have been their troubles ; because that must be a good thing, which weans our thoughts from earth and fixes them on Heaven ; that must be a good thing, which strikes from us the earthly prop, and teaches us to lean on Heaven—that shows us our earthly comforts are but broken cisterns, that can hold but little in the first instance, and that they very often run dry, when our spirits are thirsting for the wells of salvation. Now the trial, which may be pressing upon you at this time, may be heavy ; but it is not too heavy. He, who knows what you can bear, has given it only for the purpose of making you meet for His service, of keeping you down in your own esteem, of keeping you humble that "He may exalt you in due time."

Compare your case with the cases of some of the servants of God, recorded in Holy Scripture. Remember that of the venerable prophet Eli. The ark of God was taken by the Philistines, and you know that the ark contained all the symbols most dear to the Israelites—the pot of manna, the memorial of the food with which God had supported them every morning during their forty years' passage through the wilderness ; the rod of Aaron that budded—that rod by which the passage through the waters had been opened ; and the ten commandments given by God on Mount Sinai. This precious treasure, this invaluable chest, was taken by the Philistines, and on the very same day his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, met with a sudden death ; and when the tidings were brought to him, he had just time to exclaim, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth him good," when he fell back from his seat, and became a lifeless corpse.

Then you remember the case of Hezekiah. You remember the circumstance of the ambassador's coming from Babylon to Jerusalem, to congratulate him on his recovery from a dangerous sickness, and to inquire of him respecting the wonders that had been done in the land, when the sun went ten degrees backward in the sun-dial of Ahaz. Hezekiah forgetting the mercy that he had received, instead of embracing the opportunity of saying something to these poor ambassadors that might have done their souls good to all eternity ; instead of directing their minds, from the sun which they worshipped, to the



Sun of Righteousness, conducted them from one apartment to another of his palace, showed them a considerable portion of his treasure and his wealth, and, in consequence of his not rendering unto the Lord according to that he had received, the prophet was sent to him to announce that those very ambassadors, on their return to Babylon, would only carry with them such intelligence, as should induce the king of Babylon to raise an army, and to attack Jerusalem, and take all those things from him; and so it happened. And when Hezekiah heard this, he said, "Good is the Word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken."

"The Lord shall give that which is good." If it be a chastisement, it is good; if it be a bereavement, it is good; He cannot give that which is not. His people may not consider it so; but He is good;

"Good when He gives—supremely good,  
Nor less when He denies."

We are not judges of what is good for us. All that he withholds would not be good for us to receive. As that verse beautifully says, "The Lord God is a Sun and Shield; He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." Then if He does not withhold a trial from you, you ought to be quite satisfied that the trial must be a good thing, and, so far from its rousing in you any sense or expression of murmuring, it ought to rouse gratitude; because you ought to say, 'If God gives me these good things, it is a proof of His care.' You remember the very interesting story of Joseph. Ah! we should not have said that God was giving him good, when he gave him the jealousy of all his brethren; we should not have said that God was giving him that which is good, when He permitted him to be cast into a pit, and when subsequently he was sold into Egypt, and carried thither a poor captive, penniless, and almost without raiment, and then imprisoned, and then falsely charged with a crime which his heart abhorred; but it was a good thing, and the very best which God could give him, because it was preparing him for that higher destiny, which God in His providence had designed for him. Jacob said, "Joseph is not." He was led by his other sons to believe, that Joseph had been rent in pieces, and in reference to the demand for Benjamin, he said, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye would take Benjamin away. All these things are against me."

But were they against him? Let the sequel tell. And, my dear brethren, let the sequel of your trials tell. I believe that if I were to ask you your personal history—(it is not an uninteresting one, at least not to ourselves, and we are injuring our own souls, if we keep not a faithful record of God's dealings with us in a way of providence, and in a way of grace.)—I think some of your severest chastisements, some of the darkest, blackest waters, you have found to be connected with some of the best blessings to your souls. "God has given that which is good."

II. Now let us, my brethren, pass on to the second point for consideration in the text—the exercise of faith in this declaration.

And it is necessary to exercise faith in it, because poor frail nature never pronounces a trial to be a blessing; but faith refers to the duration of trials, and to the design of them. Now, some of you may have had your prospects blighted; you have been under more favourable circumstances; you were intended for much higher things—a sphere of life, which you expected to move in, and for which you received an education greatly beyond what others, now your associates, have received; all this has been turned into the very reverse of what you expected, and your circumstances now are such as to excite the sympathy and the condolence of all with whom you are acquainted.

Domestic affliction, perhaps, has been added to embarrassed circumstances; and there has been one wave of trouble rolling over your path, year after year. And yet your head is still above the waters; and you cannot perish, while your head is there. Oh! let your prayer be—"When my heart is overwhelmed within me, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." Now faith is necessary to be exercised, in order to accede to the truth of this declaration, that "the Lord gives that which is good." Sense says, 'If I be bereaved, I am bereaved; if this blessing be taken away, I have no blessing left; that is

what nature says ; ' If this comfort goes, I have nothing left.' Now faith says, ' Let it go, " I have all and abound ;" let the earthly prop be struck away, I can lean upon the everlasting arms ; let the broken cistern dry up, let the streams be cut off ; I can go at once to the " Fountain of living water," and I shall there get that which is good.' Sense says, ' My profession of religion has only gained for me unkindness and persecution from one and another ;' but faith says, " I regard not these things, none of them move me, so that I may finish my course with joy, so that I receive the end of my faith, even the salvation of my soul ;" and I will say, " Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him ; and I know that my light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Now how does faith do this ? I will tell you, beloved brethren. Faith, appropriating this doctrine of Scripture, and believing that every trial is " that which is good," sees the indissoluble relationship, the everlasting alliance, which is existing between the church and God, between God the Father, and those who are born of God.

This is the secret. Faith realizes the relation ; faith sees that there is not a single member of Christ's mystical body, who is not intimately in union with Christ, and, because in union with Christ, is viewed as a son of God, " born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." If you were not born of God, you would not cry after God ; and therefore if you have ever cried after God, you are born of God ; if you have ever cried after God as your Father, you need not a stronger assurance than this, that you are His child ; and the " Lord shall give you that which is good," because you are His child. What does He say ?—" Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts." Arminianism says, " Because you have the Spirit of His Son in your hearts, you are His sons ;" but St. Paul says, " Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts." But no voice will ever ascend from your heart unto God, till you are created anew in Christ Jesus ; and because you are a son, " God sends forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father ;" " my Lord, and my God."

III. Now, lastly, look at the inference from all this. " Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good."

Then is God my Father, and has He bound Himself to give me nothing but that which is good, and that " no good thing will He withhold ?" Then, I may expect daily supplies ; both temporal and spiritual. When I go to the throne of grace with that petition, " Give me this day my daily bread," I do not limit my petition to the bread that perisheth. I feel that, though I want bread for the body, the poor weak tabernacle, that at present is the habitation of the soul to dwell in ; yet that soul, that inhabitant, wants food, and that petition includes a prayer for both.

" Give me this day my daily bread ; " give me this day" the grace which this day will require ; the grace which its duties will require ; the grace which its events will require. For I know not what I may be called to do ; when I leave my room in the morning, I cannot foresee what the day will produce. I may go with joy and exultation in the morning, the sky may be all unclouded ; and yet ere the night come, I may be enveloped in trouble. Storms, and darkness, and tempests, may be close around me. Therefore, I need every day of my life to pray, " Give me this day my daily bread ;" the grace which this day will require as regards its duties, (what I am to do,) and the grace which this day will require as regards its events, (what I am to suffer). All things pertaining to life and to godliness are included in the petition, " Give me this day my daily bread." Then let me resolve all mysteries by this clue—" The Lord shall give that which is good." Many things I cannot make out ; you, perhaps, have had in your course, even to-day, some unexpected mysteries. Why, these mysteries are constantly springing up around us, and for the express purpose of increasing and trying our faith.

Our faith, my brethren, is like our bodies—it is improved by exercise ; and God tries our faith in order to exercise it, and He exercises it in order to strengthen it. There is not a day passes over the believer which does not exercise his faith, which does not call him to give up sense, to give up reason, to leave all to faith. ' Shall I, therefore, say, it is bad ?'—thus it is faith

argues—'shall I, therefore, say, it is bad, because I cannot see it to be good? How many questions are there which I cannot answer! how many problems which I cannot solve! how many intricacies which I cannot unravel!' Why is Satan allowed to tempt? Why is he not kept down in those regions to which his black ambition hurled him? Why is this heart permitted to trouble me? These are mysteries; and we can only solve them by that beautiful text, which, to my mind, is a key to all mysteries—"Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." There is my clue to all the difficulty. I have none other. My faith is the only key that can unlock the difficulties that are perpetually springing up around me. I have no other answer to give; but it is a good answer to be able to give.

Glorify ye, then, God "in the fires." You may not be able to see the issue of your present embarrassments, but "the Lord shall give that which is good." You know as much as is good for you. It is with the mind as with the senses; a greater degree of hearing would be an inconvenience, and a greater degree of seeing would terrify us; if we could see things microscopically, we should be afraid to stir, afraid to eat, and afraid to drink. God knows how much knowledge to give us. It is suited to our circumstances.

It is well, my brethren, that you know not the trials coming upon you next week, or the good either. If you were informed of the good things prepared for you by Providence, from the moment you knew that something better than you now have was coming to your lot, you would cease to enjoy the blessings you possess, and become indifferent to present mercies and present duties, and your whole soul would be overspread with impatience for the arrival of those blessings. And then suppose the things known by you were gloomy and adverse; suppose that heavy blow which is suspended now just over you, and in the course of two or three weeks is to fall upon you and almost crush you to the earth—if you had a foreknowledge of it, oh! what despondency and dismay would be the consequence! You would probably not sleep to-night, although the calamity were not to come upon you for weeks or for months.

I often think if we knew what was to happen, how many times we should be suffering in imagination those trials, which, because we do not know them till they come, we only suffer once in reality. Why, if you knew of that bereavement, which ere long is to deprive your family of its best and most beloved member, you would be suffering over and over again from that bereavement before it took place; now, in the absence of that knowledge, you will only suffer once.

Oh! then, is there one—(I thank God I am not that one; I thank God I do not know what is to come)—is there one that would undraw that veil which hides from us future troubles? The assurance is, "God will give that which is good;" and that ought to satisfy us. He is our Friend and our Father, and is far more concerned for our happiness than we can be. Nothing is hid from Him. "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?" Oh! He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness; He knoweth thy soul in adversity; He seeth all thy dangers, He knoweth all thy wants; and surely nothing can surprise Him whose eyes are in every place, nothing can elude His notice who numbers the very hairs of our head.

When Abraham was called to that great trial of leaving his country and his kindred and his father's house, and to go into a land he knew not; yet because he knew one thing—he knew with whom he was going—"Get thee into a land that I will show thee"—Abraham was not careful to know where he was going; it was quite sufficient for him that he was following a Guide who could not, and would not if He could, lead him astray. And what I should like, if it please God to bless this sermon to-day to the hearts of the tried and afflicted—what I should like, in the hands of God the Spirit, to be able to do, is, to persuade you that love—Divine, holy, everlasting, fatherly love—is the spring of your trials, as much as it is the spring of your comforts. The chastening which is now making your hearts bleed and smart, is as much a part of the everlasting covenant as is the "glory that is to be revealed." We ought to bear this in mind. The covenant is "ordered in all things;" it is ordered in all the trials, as well as in all the blessings.

It is the covenant which comforted David under many depressions:

"Although my house be not so with God"—"although I have spoiled that son Absalom, and now he wants to drive me from my throne and family—"although my house be not so with God, yet He has made with me," poor worthless creature that I am, "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; and this is all my salvation, and all my desire." And you know that "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." "Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good."

And we know that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God, that are the called according to His purpose." You see how one might go on quoting the parallel passages; they all prove that "the Lord shall give that which is good."

There is one good which I must just mention, and which He will surely give—though when we are beginning to dip our feet in the cold waters of Jordan,

"We linger shivering on the brink,  
And fear to launch away."

And what is that other good? A harp to sing our Father's praise, a crown in our Father's house, a home to our homeless spirits, an eternal residence with our Elder Brother, and all our holy relations who have died in the Lord. And is not this a good thing? "Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good."

Your uncertainty, then, my brethren, only regards the roughness of the way; the end of that way is "an inheritance incorruptible." An "inheritance." You do not purchase heaven, you take it as an inheritance; you take it on your heirship, "because ye are sons." Your Elder Brother came and redeemed your persons and your property, and made a new settlement of the inheritance; and now "all things are yours," and can never be taken from you. Your God and Father first entrusted the inheritance to Adam, and he was found unworthy of the trust; and, therefore, He would not trust the inheritance to one again who will forfeit it, but committed it to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has redeemed it, made a new settlement of it for the children, and secured it for ever.

Oh! what a prospect then!—to go from a cross to a crown, from work to wages; to go from a field of battle to ascend the chariot of everlasting victory! Oh! may the Lord, whom you are now following, perhaps, with weeping, and supplication, and in darkness—may He shine upon your path, and make you believe the text this day! "The Lord shall give"—it is not a peradventure, it does not depend upon you; it is bound by the everlasting covenant, that "the Lord shall give that which is good." Oh! may He write this text upon your hearts, and fill you with all "joy and peace in believing," that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost!

## THE DEMONIAK RECOVERED.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. JAMES PARSONS.

PREACHED IN THE NEW CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, MIDDLETON ROAD, DALSTON,  
ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, AUGUST 25, 1847.

On occasion of the Opening of the Church.

*"Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid."—Luke xiii. 35.*

WE have, my brethren, frequently observed and felt, what a profound and delightful interest is attached to the narratives which record the intercourse of our Lord Jesus Christ with men, during the period of His incarnate existence. Not one statement that He uttered, and not one action that He performed, was insignificant or ordinary. His movements uniformly corresponded with His own attributes of infinite majesty and love, and were designed to develope those attributes in the most ample manner, for the homage and the admiration of mankind. Frequently, therefore, to ponder upon the truths which the evangelists have preserved respecting Him, is our obvious and imperative duty; nor should we ever be satisfied, but as results are secured upon our intellects and affections, which shall seal their rectitude and peace.

The actions of our Lord Jesus Christ, especially those which consisted in the performance of miracles, which constitute a large proportion of His personal history, for various reasons merit our studious and earnest regard. They were conclusive attestations of His commission as the Messiah; they were bright displays of the glory of His personal character; and in many instances, at least, they were designed representations of those great general truths, which have respect to the spiritual condition of mankind, and the operations of the work of redemption.

Without detaining you by citations, we at once place in this class the miracle which is recorded in the language now read as our text. It was among the most signal which our great Redeemer ever achieved; and it sets forth the general principle we have adverted to, in a manner the most comprehensive and impressive.

Let us, my brethren, endeavour to meditate, in the mode we have now noticed, upon the fact before us; while we observe, that in this case a malignant disorder had been endured; that a signal recovery was effected; and that important results were secured. Here will be found materials for profit, which under the Divine blessing shall terminate in the welfare of all.

I. In the first place, you observe, that in this case a malignant disorder had been endured.

This disorder is defined, in the language of our text, and more circumstantially in the verses which precede it; and we must now observe what is announced to us, respecting both its nature and its effects.

1. As to the nature of the disorder, the person before us is described as "a certain man which had devils long time."

Foul spirits, or demons, had mysteriously, though really, been permitted to enter into his frame, and to render his corporeal and mental existence subservient to the will and power of Satan. This interpretation, we are aware, has been denied, and it has been alleged, that the expressions signify nothing more than ordinary lunacy; but it appears to us impossible to consider the narrative itself, in connection with parallel cases, and especially in connection with the explanations rendered by the great Redeemer concerning them, without admitting the fact of positive diabolical possession. Whatever objections

and difficulties may have been started by sceptical reasoning, the testimony is conclusive, that Satan and his inferior agents were permitted, in the time of the Saviour, to exercise the power we have described,—individual men, probably prepared in some measure by physical or moral conformation, being rendered their habitation, their sport, and their prey. Such was he who now crossed the path of the Son of God.

The disorder thus indicated to us must be regarded as illustrating a fearful truth in the moral world, namely, that Satan, the great adversary of God and of man, exercises a powerful influence over the souls of the human family, bringing them, in their character, and in their state, to a condition approximating to his own. This dominion, we are informed, originated in the success of his temptation, applied to our first parents, amidst the bowers of Paradise; and in consequence of their public relationship to their posterity, that dominion extended generally to their descendants; nor is there one member of the human family, who is not naturally under this fell and this fatal sway. The assurances of the sacred writings to this effect are numerous and distinct. Besides the designed explanations, which are rendered by the Redcemer of cases like the one before us, in other modes He expressed the fact. As, for example, when He announced to the Jews—"You are of your father the devil; and the lusts of your father you will do,"—here describing their natural state as sinners. And again, when He placed Himself in official antagonism with the powers of darkness. And one of His apostles has spoken of Satan, as "the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." And another of His apostles has spoken of those whom he terms "the children of the wicked one," afterwards explaining that "the wicked one is Satan, who deceiveth the whole world."

On this, and on testimony of a kindred nature, then, we aver the condition of our race; and we press it, my brethren, for your own recognition, that so long as you remain untouched by another, by a higher, and by a far more commanding agency, so long you are "led captive by the devil at his will."

2. Thus is illustrated the nature of the disorder; and we find the statement also presented as to its effects.

The recorded effects of the disorder upon the victim here alluded to, are most pitiable and touching. His reason was overturned; he made himself an outcast and an outlaw from human society and from human sympathy; he haunted the abodes of disgusting desolation and ruin; he was rent with paroxysms of wild and uncontrollable convulsion; and with his own hands he inflicted on his body wounds of anguish and of agony. It is stated respecting him, that he "ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs." The unclean spirit "oftentimes had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness." And in the parallel passage by the evangelist Mark it is added, that "almost night and day he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones." What a fearful spectacle!—too fearful almost, after the lapse of ages, to gaze upon but for a moment! How savage and how relentless were the foul fiends within him, who had thus reduced him to the endurance of extremest woe!

My brethren, the subjection of man to the moral dominion of Satan exposes him to effects, of which those we have now described furnish a solemn and a striking analogy. All who are under the power of the evil one are sunk in misery, and misery only is in the prospect. From the narrative before us you may be reminded of such facts as the following.

There is the perversion of reason; for when we rightly estimate sinful appetites and habits, in their relationship to the moral duties and to the final interests of men, we must pronounce them, in the strongest, the most absolute, and the worst sense, to constitute a state of madness; and would to God that every one now present would remember and feel, that sin is the madness of the soul!

Again: there is the exclusion of the soul from all associations which can constitute its comfort and its dignity. The soul is destitute of a resting-place and a home; it is outlawed and stripped; it is alienated from promises, from mercy, and from God; and it abides only amid the scenes of barrenness, privation, and death.

Then, again, there is the endurance of positive pain and agony. Indulgences are fraught with pangs; and the passions which prompt them only infuriate and convulse. The conscience, if it be not indurated and "seared as with a hot iron," is lacerated with fear and remorse, filling the chambers of the heart with spectres of frightful horror. And then, beyond the endurances of the present, there is prepared, in righteous retribution, another world, where torment reigns supreme, inexorable, and for ever; for those who die in sin depart to the "everlasting fire," which has been "prepared for the devil and his angels."

Now, my brethren, is it possible for us to contemplate these recorded effects of sin, as we find them presented in the unerring page of revelation, without strong and thrilling emotions? The man who had been delivered must, amidst all his gratitude and gladness, have been inspired with awe; and as to the men who are yet unhealed, and yet exposed to danger, what must be demanded from them? My hearers, I entreat you to resist the delusion which has deceived you, and to put distinctly before yourselves your present condition and your future prospects:—now irrational, now debased, now destitute, and now peaceless; with only hell at the last! 'Slaves of Satan! hear! And if, while you hear, you tremble, then think of emancipation; then inquire for a shelter; then "flee from the wrath to come."

II. We have thus considered, that a malignant disorder had been endured; and you will now observe, secondly, that a signal recovery was effected.

Desperate and apparently hopeless as was the malady, relief was at hand; mercy had been provided, and a cure was to be accomplished, intended to excite the admiration of ages. And we must here observe—the Being by whom the recovering agency was exerted; and the extent to which that recovering agency operated.

1. As to the Being by whom the recovering agency was exerted, it was, we need scarcely remind you, the Lord Jesus Christ. He had crossed over the lake of Gennesaret, on the western shores of which He had been teaching, when, acquainted with the work which He had to perform, He overruled by His unerring wisdom that the torn and wretched wanderer should meet Him as He landed, there to become the trophy of His sovereign power and grace. In the recovery which He effected, He was performing an important department of the commission with which He had been invested, and He was adding to the proofs that upon Him devolved offices of the highest moment, in relation to the honour of the Godhead and to the happiness of mankind. My brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ is the one Deliverer appointed for men, from their subjugation to the slavery of Satan. In ancient times, and even upon the day of the first transgression, He had been foretold and announced as "the seed of the woman," who should "bruise the serpent's head;" and when, in compliance with the Divine arrangement, He appeared "in the fulness of time," and passed through His wondrous process of humiliation unto death, and then of exaltation unto glory, it was described as the summary, respecting the object of His appearance—"For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." What He performed in His personal teaching, and by His miracles, were so many preliminaries to the grand struggle which occurred at the period of His death; and when, upon the cross of Calvary, amidst the mysterious darkness of the ninth hour and the convulsions of the universe, He "cried with a loud voice, It is finished, and gave up the Ghost," then the conflict was completed, and then the victory was secure. His death was an expiatory sacrifice, intended to afford an ample and all-sufficient provision for the pardon of the sins of men, and for their deliverance from the final consequences of sin, both in time and throughout eternity; and the moral influence of that sacrifice, associated with its justifying grace, was designed to deliver men from the power and from the dominion of sin, and to endue them with the principles and habits of righteousness and of true holiness. Then He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, in order to attest its sufficiency, and in order to assume and to exercise those mediatorial functions, of priesthood and of regality, by which He might to the full extent accomplish the purposes of infinite benevolence and love. And now He reigns supreme over the wide universe, "all power being given to Him in heaven and in earth," for the one purpose of securing the emancipation of fallen man.

It is thus, my brethren, that He appears to us; as the one Emancipator,

the one great Deliverer, the Stronger than "the strong man armed," who takes from him his armour, wherein he trusts, and deprives him of his spoil—summoning and bringing forth his countless vassals and victims from their dark and loathsome dungeons, to the enjoyment of light, and life, and liberty, and day. He marches on and on, through successive ages, throughout the territories of our fallen world, "glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength," and ever announcing Himself, as in ancient prophecy, by the sublime and well-merited titles—"I that speak in righteousness am mighty to save."

Further: it will be observed, that the Saviour accomplishes the deliverance of man by the manifestation of Himself to them, in His person and in His work. The demoniac, you observe, saw the Redeemer; and it was in connection with His personal appearance, that the cure was effected and achieved; and in this manner the Saviour also spiritually manifests Himself to the understandings of men. And this He has provided for, in an ample and delightful manner.

He presents Himself to man by His Word, which has been apprehended in the written oracles and in the oral teaching of the truth; declares His character and His modes of procedure, explains how the benefits of that character and that procedure are secured, and urges them by all the powers and impulses of moral suasion, to resort to Him that they may be blessed.

He also presents Himself to men by His Spirit,—the operations of that Spirit being secured by virtue of His mediatorial work, and that Spirit bringing home the truth to the conscience, so that it is understood, estimated, and embraced. And thus it is, that in the emphatic language of Scripture He is manifested, He is revealed to the heart.

Now, my brethren, in this manner the Saviour has appeared to you. Both by His Word and by His Spirit He has appeared to many. And these are they who have been "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." They have been "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." By His Word alone He has appeared unto all. There is not one person in this assembly, to whom Christ has not presented Himself by His Word. Thus He has presented Himself to you repeatedly; and thus He presents Himself to you now—for now you are challenged with your guilt, now you are warned of your danger, now you are invited to resort to Him as your deliverer, and now you are invited to believe upon Him that you may be saved. Look to Him; behold Him in the attributes of His majesty and of His love; cry from your innermost hearts that He would stretch forth the mighty hand that shall accomplish your rescue. And while we thus invoke and entreat you, oh! that the Spirit may descend with the Word, that the Word may be not in vain!

2. This, my brethren, is the Being by whom the recovering agency is exerted; and you are now to observe, the extent to which that agency operated.

We are informed in this beautiful narrative, that by some mystic charm the sufferer was attracted to the Saviour. The foul spirit within him was quelled, as in the presence of a master became humble and submissive, and was expelled. "When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, thou Son of God Most High? I beseech Thee, torment me not. (For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.) And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. And they besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the deep"—into the abyss, the prison-house of torment, their legitimate abode, where they are represented as being reserved until the judgment of the great day. The request was partially granted, and another disposition was made, in order to accomplish another commission of judgment, on men who were guilty of violating one of the first institutes of the Mosaic law, to which they were still subjected, by the pursuit of an unlawful and prohibited traffic; but to the man himself they returned no more: he was "found sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind." What a change!—from the frenzied maniac, in his wild convulsions and his angry mien, to one quiet and clothed, rejoicing in privilege, and exulting in the hope of happiness! It was, indeed, the accomplishment of a new creation.



And, my brethren, here is well represented what is accomplished upon the soul of man, when the Saviour presents Himself to that soul, by the Word and by the Spirit. It is no matter what may be the potency of the grasp which the votaries of evil hold upon the heart; it is no matter what may be the obstacles exerted against the introduction of new and nobler agencies: all is useless, and all is absolutely in vain. The faculties are stirred to their utmost depths; they cry out against their thralldom, and they demand their liberty. They are impelled by high impulses, which prompt them resistlessly to seek deliverance of Him from whom alone they can obtain it. He listens—He answers—He visits in tenderness and in majesty; He tells the foul inhabitant within to depart—and the tyrant forthwith obeys and avails. He departs—and his dominion is irrevocably cast away; he departs—and the fatal disorder which he had inflicted is gone and has been cured; he departs—and the scene where he celebrated his polluted revelries and disgusting orgies is now purified, beautified, and transformed. The man is “in his right mind.” Reason has resumed her throne; all the faculties are blended in beautiful exactness and harmony, and they are employed in high purposes, such as become an intelligent and an immortal being. He is “clothed:” he has on him “the garment of righteousness and the robe of salvation.” He is “sitting at the feet of Jesus”—learning of Him, enjoying sweet and delightful fellowship with Him, and through Him with kindred and holy beings, and is enabled to exult in all the communications of infinite benevolence and love. He is protected: no adversary again can enter, to enthrall or to destroy; for there is One who hath said—“My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” He is enriched: he is made possessor of “the unsearchable riches of Christ;” “all things are his, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; for He is Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” He has peace and joy; “peace that passeth all understanding,” and “joy” that is “unspeakable and full of glory;” and in place of a home in the dark and fearful world of hell, where torment reigns for ever, he has an habitation yonder, in the mansions of his Father’s house, which the great Deliverer has gone before to prepare, and which He will return shortly to confer—where “there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore,” and where the spirit, emancipated and saved, shall be employed for ever in the occupations of gratitude and of praise.

Such, my brethren, is the glorious rescue; and countless millions shall receive it. The time will come, when the Saviour will have fulfilled that noble vision, which in the darkness of His humiliation shed a moment’s ray of light and gladness in his heart, when He exclaimed—“I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven;” and He, by the operations of His love, will cause that “wicked one” to be cast down from the whole world, and the whole world to acknowledge Him as its Redeemer, its Lord, and its all.

III. Then, brethren, from this signal recovery effected, we are also to observe, that important results were secured.

And following the mode of illustration which we have (as we conceive) with perfect legitimacy presented, we must observe—the effects, as they were produced upon the minds of others, and as they were produced upon the minds of the individual himself.

1. Observe the effects as they were produced upon the minds of others.

It is recorded, that the men who had been guilty of the unholy traffic, and who by the loss of their foul property had been abundantly reprov’d and judged, “were afraid.” They that sold the swine “fled, and went and told it in the city, and in the country. Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind; and they were afraid.” The term “afraid” is not to be taken in the mere ordinary and vulgar sense of the term, but in that of reverence and of awe. They were terrified; they saw themselves confronted with a sovereign power; and under that influence, “they also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.” “And His fame was sounded abroad, throughout all the region.”

My brethren, what we desire to impress upon you here, is a fact which no

genuine Christian will for a moment dream of disputing, that any real and well ascertained conversion, by the energy of the Divine Spirit, through the work of the great Redeemer, must produce powerful influences upon the minds of those who can personally and truly observe it. Doubtless a large proportion of those who are now in the presence of God, trust that they have undergone the transformation of redeeming grace; and, my Christian friends, addressing myself especially to you, let me remind you that your conversion, when it occurred and when it was ascertained, did produce immense results. Although, perhaps, you but imperfectly calculated and estimated them, it was an event which vibrated to the most distant regions of the universe.

Anger was excited. Satan was angry, and his ministers of darkness were angry, when they saw you snatched from the burning, and taken from their thralldom and from their doom, into "the glorious liberty" and the glorious prospects "of the children of God." Ungodly men, perhaps, were angry. Your old companions in sin cursed you; and they cursed the religion which had separated them from you; and their malignity was proved, either by their vain despire, or by their equally hostile machinations, to bring you back within their power.

But not only anger: astonishment was produced. You were a wonder unto others; they saw that which amazed them. There was the drunkard sober; there was the lascivious chaste; there was the defrauder honest; there was the bold unbeliever humble and confiding; there was the votary of the world transformed into the subject of mercy and of redemption. They were astonished at the transformation; not a few were awed by the event, and induced to exclaim—"This is the finger of God."

And then, not merely was there anger and astonishment—there was joy. Your parents, your partners, your children, your friends, they rejoiced over you, when you told them of what God had done for your souls; and they greeted you with a warm and affectionate embrace, such as the affection of kindred or of alliance never could have rendered. There was joy to your ministers. They had laboured for you, they had yearned for you, they had wept for you; they had agonised before the throne of the heavenly grace, in earnest and importunate prayer for you. They were well-nigh hopeless; they had dreamed that some one had said, with a master-voice—"He is joined to idols; let him alone." But in the extremity, there came the mighty voice of grace; and you were changed; and as they saw you entering into the church, approaching the altar, and sitting yourselves at the table which commemorates redemption, they looked at you with thrilling hearts and glistening eyes, and in their gladness said, as did the apostle, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and our joy." But higher than earth—angels were glad. "There is joy," saith Jesus, "in the presence of the angels, over one sinner that repenteth;" and as our poet has well expressed it—

"Pleasure and praise run through their host,  
To see a sinner come;  
Then Satan has a captive lost,  
And Christ a subject won."

Higher yet,—the great Redeemer saw in you "of the travail of His soul, and was satisfied." And the Eternal Father saw the prodigal coming from his "far country," and from his wanderings, and seeking again a father's home and a father's heart; and he spread the banquet, and prepared the garments of righteousness, and said, as He clasped you to His bosom—"It is meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this My son," My daughter, "was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found."

2. Again, brethren, we have also to observe, the effect on the mind of the individual himself.

And love to his deliverer was produced. It is said with regard to him, that he "sat at the feet of Jesus;" probably believing himself there to be more secure from the attacks of his old adversary than elsewhere, but still from an emotion of love—as it is afterwards said, "the man out of whom the devils were departed besought Him that He might be with him." The ransomed one would be with the Ransomer, to gaze upon Him, and to admire Him; and in the gaze of admiration to drink new draughts of gratitude and of love.

And love, brethren, to Him by whom we have been emancipated from the thralldom of sin and Satan is the inevitable, and ought to be legitimately the master-impulse of our existence. The Saviour assumes constantly, that we must love Him by whom our deliverance has been achieved. Brethren, you love Him; and yet how scantily! If Christ comes and asks—"Lovest thou Me more than all these?" like the apostle Peter, how you shrink from and repudiate the comparison! And when He presents the inquiry, without the comparison—"Lovest thou Me?" you can answer, tremulously perhaps, but yet from the heart—"Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." But oh! brethren, that you could but love Him more, and that the service of to-night, with all its high associations, might induce you now to cultivate more of the spirit of love! You have been redeemed: estimate the vast transformation which in that one word is involved. You were alienated; now you are "brought nigh." You were darkness; now you are "light in the Lord." You were outcasts; now you "have a name better than that of sons and of daughters." You were the children of wrath; now you are the heirs of mercy. You were traveling to hell; now you are rising to heaven, and heaven soon will crown you with the ineffable fruition of its glories. And consider the immense price and cost, at which that deliverance, with all its glorious consequences, has been secured. Go to Bethlehem; see the Babe "laid in a manger, because there was no room for Him in the inn;" follow Him on, till as a humble youth He was employed in subjection to His earthly parents, apparently unnoticed and unknown; follow Him still to His public ministry; watch Him wandering homeless and houseless along the deserts and mountains of Judæa, and while "the foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests. He had not where to lay His head;" go to the garden, and watch Him, as He prays in the anticipation of His sorrows, "so that His very sweat became (as it were) great drops of blood falling down to the ground;" then away to the judgment-hall, where He is accused of blasphemy. He is spit upon; He is buffeted; He is smitten with the palm of the hand; He is scourged; He is clothed in purple and crowned with thorns; He carries a cross to the mount of murder; and when He has reached it, they drive the rugged nails into His hands and feet, and rear Him up between two malefactors, a spectacle of ignominy to heaven and to earth; there, in mysterious agony He cries—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And He dies; and He dies *for you!* And you have to follow Him upwards to heaven, and see Him there, with all the marks of His suffering and of His death, pleading that death and those sufferings—*for you!* And now for the love! Shall the preacher wait, till you have breathed a fervent aspiration to the Divine Spirit, that another and a more potent impulse of love shall descend upon you and in you? Brethren, it must be already. And now we say for ourselves, as did the great apostle—"The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all then were all dead, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again." "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and I will give praise." I will love, till love shall be perfected in that state where "unto Him that loved us, and gave Himself for us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood," we shall ascribe "the glory and dominion, for ever and ever." You must, brethren, as a result of your deliverance, be filled with love. Heaven is love—and love is heaven.

Then again: zeal for his deliverer was produced; for we are informed, in a subsequent part of the narrative, that "Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee." His own desire to be with Jesus was overruled; a further transformation took possession of his character, and he cheerfully obeyed, as a testimony of his affection; "he went his way and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done for him." My brethren, every conversion is to be acknowledged. "Come, all ye that fear the Lord, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul." It may be that some among you have hesitated to acknowledge and announce the transformation you have experienced. Some, peradventure, connected with the congregation about to worship stately within these walls, are in this position. You have halted; you have hesitated; you have evaded, hitherto. Confess your Saviour before men. I would, brethren, that this

season might be hallowed, as was a similar season in the city where I have long had the privilege to labour, when, at the dedication of a new and larger house of God under my ministry, many who had previously endeavoured to conceal their impressions and their change, avowed themselves impelled by a strong conviction of duty to take advantage of the transition, and proclaim themselves "not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." Gladden the hearts of your ministers—gladden the hearts of your earnest Christian friends, by following the example and showing "what great things God hath done for you." Show it by verbal announcement and conversation; show it by holy deportment and example; show it by seeking union with the Christian community which, as a New Testament church, is about to exercise its functions within these walls; and show it, after commemorating the death of your Lord at His table, by an earnestness, an activity, a zeal, in the promotion of His honour and His glory; and if one of the verses of our poets might express the feelings that animated you, it would be in the following lines:

"Now would I tell to all around  
What a dear Saviour I have found;  
Or point to His atoning blood,  
And say, Behold the way to God."

Christ, brethren, will have no indolent enjoyers of privilege with Him. He will not permit you to be with Him, "sitting at His feet," acting and attempting nothing for the furtherance of His glory; He sends you away, in one sense, while He preserves you always near Him in another. He sends you away, and tells you to make known His mercy and bring others to His footstool too; and oh! we wish that there were not a man or woman who has known the efficacy of redeeming grace, who would refuse ever to be satisfied, but as they could bring some trophy to Him by whom they themselves have been redeemed and blessed. Look, brethren, at your families; look at your kindred; look at the crowded population of this city, the empress of the world; look throughout your country; look at "the habitations of cruelty," groaning under superstition and idolatry; and when you remember that there is mercy provided for them, and that deliverance through your instrumentality may be imparted to them, say what limit you will place to your charity and your zeal but what you find in the landmarks of nature and in the limits of the earth.

We must look onward, brethren, to the grand and glorious consummation, when liberty shall reign over our apostate globe. It is recorded in the memoirs of an admirable and lately departed missionary, that in the Western Indies, when the night had arrived on which the last link of slavery was to be broken, he woke up and remained with a congregated assembly until the midnight hour had passed, and then pronounced the words—"Slavery is dead;" and there arose "the anthem of the free." And, my Christian brethren, we are to watch, and labour, and pray, until the midnight of the whole earth's slavery shall be passed; and then the jubilee trumpet shall be sounded, and the acclamations of heaven shall greet with rapture a free and emancipated world. Who among you would not partake of the triumph, and swell the gale? Go forward, then, to your high vocation—the votaries of truth, of God, and of man; and believe it, that if you celebrate not the final triumphs on earth, you shall yet celebrate those triumphs in the perfection of a nobler world.

My brethren, there has been in the discourse we have delivered so much of the spirit of application, especially so far as Christians are concerned, that much difficulty is obviated, on arriving at the conclusion of our address; and as it is our anxiety, in such an heated atmosphere, not to trespass much longer upon your patience, or your time, we would but briefly remind you of the course over which we have travelled:—man's degrading and perilous slavery; man's gracious and all-restoring recovery; and man's high obligation, while others gaze, with anger, with astonishment, or with joy, to live in the spirit of love and of zeal:—and then, passing onwards, we have but one last address to deliver, and from this service, and the interesting engagements of this day, (publicly, at least,) you will release me.

Not a few are here, of whom we must fear, that they are still in bondage and in thralldom. Every person here who is a stranger to conversion, is a

stranger to Christian liberty and privilege and happiness. You are yet in bondage. Unconsciousness on your part ameliorates not the misery. When you have visited the haunts of madness, have you never felt that the unconsciousness of the malady has to you only heightened and rendered still more dark and tragical the disorder? And oh! brethren, with regard to yourselves, you may fancy that there is music in your chains, and so forget the load; but still that alters not the fact. You are numbered among the worst of slaves. For what is slavery? Do you find it in the convict establishments of your own country, where the victims of crime and of guilt are huddled together in unrewarded labour, ready to be met with death, if the least attempt at escape should be made? Do you find it among the haunts of yet unredeemed slavery, beyond the waters of the Atlantic, where men professing freedom brutalize their fellow-men, and violate beyond the power of language to express with proper indignation, the first law of freedom—that God formed all men free and equal? And do you find it there, in the presence of the ferocious task-master, and of the savage and relentless torturer? No, it is here, where human beings are cherishing sin, pursuing sin, and seeking the wages of sin! And you, my hearers, who are in this position, in the name of God Most High, and in the name of your own undying souls, I pronounce you to be the very worst of slaves! It matters not that you have rank, that you have property, that you have intellectual refinement, that you have high and poetic imagery, that you have social power, influence, and opportunity. All these appliances are nothing more than the garlands which festoon the neck of the victim, as it is led to the altar of sacrifice; and we pronounce you again, in the name of God Most High, and in the name of your own undying souls, to be the very worst of slaves! Even now the iron is entering into your soul—and your soul will feel it; and the torturing poison, if it be not removed, will rankle in its abode for ever.

And now, brethren, surely, is the time for deliverance. Jesus Christ appears to you; He comes in His Word, by His minister. And now He stands at the door and knocks. Is there in your heart a respondent thrill? It is the vibration of the Spirit, answering to the knock of the Saviour at the door of the heart. And shall He not be welcome? And will you not now entreat Him to exercise His resistless power, to deliver and to redeem?

Oh! the struggle—invisible, but intent, which at this very moment is occurring within these walls! *There, and there, and there, and there*—is a tremendous struggle—for the soul! Satan, and Christ—slavery, and freedom—hell, and heaven:—how is it to terminate?

“How dreadful is this place! Surely it is the house of God and the gate of heaven.” Surely now fetters are breaking—spirits are expanding. They are marching forth from their prison-house, in the new-born dignity of liberty, and are gazing upon the privileges which are to be consummated in heaven. Who hesitates? We pray you to decide, and to admit Him who asks you; to submit and to be saved.

“Admit Him, ere His anger burn;  
Lest He depart, and ne’er return.”

Admit Him, ere at His door you stand only that you may be denied. And remember, that to be denied by Christ is to be everlastingly damned!

My brethren, we would willingly proceed, but emotion crushes language; and the preacher must be silent. You will go to your habitations; but oh! consider whether, when you depart, there follow you the foul fiends, exclaiming in mockery and derision—“There goes one who refused liberty, that he might be a bondsman—who refused privilege, that he might be a pauper—who refused heaven, that he might bid hell with its profoundest horrors—Hail!—or whether you will depart, with angel-spirits to guard you to your dwelling, fanning you as with the fragrance of their ambrosial wings—welcoming you as their companions in glory, as the heirs of salvation, and waiting to greet you when another transition has passed over, that they may convoy you to their celestial abode, where you shall share their splendour and their glory and their felicity, and where you shall be equal to them? Choose ye for yourselves!

May the Divine Spirit enable you to choose aright; and may we all appear in that upper world, whither our Deliverer has gone to prepare a place for us!

## OUR FATHERS.

### A Funeral Sermon,

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM BORROWS, M.A.

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH CLAPHAM,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCT. 24, 1847.

On the Death of the Rev. Dr. Dealtry.

*"Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?"—*  
Zechariah i. 5.

THE recollection of past privileges, and of those departed who had been honoured by God as instruments of obtaining them for us, or preserving them to us, is very affecting to grateful minds, whatsoever be the mercies of present circumstances or the expectations in prospect of future days. In all possible events and occurrences with which God may visit His people, or ordain them to be visited, this word is adapted to be their stay and support under bereaving providences—"Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him"—(Ecclesiastes viii. 12).

The force of the foregoing observations has been deeply felt, and is so in my own mind, while contemplating our recent bereavements, and the solemn circumstances wherein we are placed. The removals of several, and the consequent afflictions of others for their deprivations, have lately spoken loudly, and, it is hoped, profitably, to this congregation; while, through infinite mercy, such tokens for good have been manifest in them as to lead us to adopt the admonition, though they bare no rule nor were instructors in the church—"whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation—Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever"—(Hebrews xiii. 7, 8). And now we are brought to the experience of another great bereavement, the removal of our late dearly beloved and highly esteemed rector, which is felt as a solemn visitation of the whole parish, and has drawn forth, with strong reason, the tokens of general lamentation and mourning for the loss sustained in many ways by this parish, and neighbourhood, and county. But the expression of my personal feelings must be suppressed, and not trusted to wander into expatiation upon the affecting recollections of kindnesses extended over the space of so many years, (about thirty-two,) during which I have ministered in this place, or I might be tempted to utter divers particulars, affecting to my own mind, but which to some might seem too much like to eulogy of the departed, (though so highly esteemed,) who is gone far beyond the reach of our censure or commendation, and has his eternal inheritance unalterably fixed by "the only wise God, our Saviour," infinitely independent of all judgment or praise of men.

The words of the text, instituting inquiry connected with the departed, and admonitory to the living with whom we have to do, appear to be appropriate and suitable for explanation and use on so interesting and solemn an occasion. This testimony came primarily to the ancient church in Judea, and during the

period of the Babylonish captivity, and is so opened, introducing the words for our present contemplation : " In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts ; Turn ye unto Me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts ; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings : but they did not hear, nor hearken unto Me, saith the Lord. Your fathers, where are they ? and the prophets, do they live for ever ? But My words and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers ? and they returned and said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath He dealt with us"—(Zech. i. 1—6). Such is the primary connection in which the text stands ; and its bearing, as God's recorded Word, upon us generally, as of the professing and visible church, is this—" Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples ; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come"—(1 Corinthians x. 11) ; and upon the experimentally godly it is this—" For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope"—(Romans xv. 4).

In order to the profitable and right understanding of this word, and of its application to us, it is needful to consider, as ability is given, first, the people addressed, and those to whom a reference is made ; secondly, the amount of signification, and the intention, or object, of the question proposed ; and, thirdly, the permanent use of the record, as God speaks by it to us, and in our circumstances.

I. First, the people addressed, and those to whom a reference is made, are to be considered.

The prophecy is addressed generally to the visible church, who lived in the typical land of promise, and under the Old Testament dispensation. It was declared, or delivered, by the prophet from God, toward the close of the Babylonish captivity and exile. The " fathers" are represented as including those with whom the Lord had been sore displeased ; and, therefore, the people immediately addressed in the text are their descendants in the flesh—whether they might or might not be partakers of " like precious faith" with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all of their ancestors who were persuaded of the promises, and embraced them, and confessed themselves to be " strangers and pilgrims on the earth." These are the people addressed—all the posterity of such progenitors, who inherited from their births their evil nature, were encompassed with their high privileges, and laden with their proportionate responsibilities, according to that measure of the equity of the righteous Lord to which even fallen men affect to approximate in their dealings and decisions : " That servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required : and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more"—(Luke xii. 47, 48). Such are the people to whom the words now under consideration originally came as the testimony of God ; and as part of His permanent Record to be made known to all nations for the obedience of faith, to the successors of such, in their external circumstances.

privileges, have they a current application. And thus they become God's Word to us, legitimately and properly applied according to our various cases and characters, fruits and professions, and the roots of all in the heart, of whom the Judge of quick and dead beareth this solemn and soul-awakening testimony—"I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings"—(Jeremiah xvii. 10). With a view to the ultimate settlements of that judgment are all the dealings of God with men, and His revelation to them in this time.

The "fathers" referred to, as it is plainly proved by the context, comprehend the whole nation, constituting the visible church—all "of Israel," even those who were not, properly speaking, "Israel;" as the children of promise, sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, are counted for the seed. To such had the word of exhortation and reproof come, in exposing their evil characters and deeds: "O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? are these His doings? do not My words do good to him that walketh uprightly?"—(Micah ii. 7). Such, with those who were "Israel" indeed, as having the same precious faith given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, appear to be "the fathers" brought to the recollection of the people addressed, and set before them, as it were, for their profitable contemplation—whether, as in one case, for admonition and warning to those among the survivors who had "a name to live," but were yet dead in their sins and in the uncircumcision of their hearts—or, as in the other, for comfort, and edification, and joy of faith to those, who, being of the same spiritual circumcision whereunto they had already severally attained, walked by the same rule, minded the same thing, followed "the end of faith, even the salvation of their souls."

The "prophets" to whom a reference is made in the address under consideration, appear to signify those really sent of God, who spake His true Word, and no vision out of their own hearts; for of such a character only, and with such a testimony, are they specifically stated to have come, who are noticed in the introduction to the text, or in immediate connection with it. Thus the Lord testifieth against this people, in allusion to these His dealings with them and their demeanour under all His visitations, when He warneth another prophet of what he may expect to be a result of his ministrations—"Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: yet they hearkened not unto Me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers. Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee; thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee. But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth. Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of His wrath. For the children of Judah have done evil in My sight, saith the Lord: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to pollute it"—(Jeremiah vii. 25—30). On the other hand, both the message and the messengers would be acceptable, and as life from the dead, to those whom the Lord taught to profit, and whose case is thus beautifully delineated for the comfort and encouragement of succeeding generations: "Therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for Him. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: then shalt weep no more: He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer



thee. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left"—(Isaiah xxx. 18—21). So "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds." And when He had finished His great work of atonement and righteousness, having obtained eternal redemption, He "ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"—(Ephesians iv. 11—13). And such hath been God's visitation of this country in general, and of this neighbourhood and parish in particular—sending His Gospel of peace, and the messengers thereof, and "finishing the work, and cutting it short in righteousness," whensoever His Word shall have accomplished what He pleased, and have prospered in the object whereto He hath sent it. The grand result of the visitation will appear in the light of that ultimate period of time, when God will "judge the world in righteousness, and the people with His truth."

II. Secondly, the amount of signification, and the intention, or object, of the questions proposed, are matters for further consideration.

The inquiry is not after the existence of the absent "fathers"—whether in their day of time they had received or rejected the testimony of the prophets, as if in any doubt of them severally having a local habitation. It doth not touch the truth of the immortality of the souls of the prophets, as if there could be a shadow of a doubt, in the light of God's Word, of their "living for ever." But it regardeth the mortal existence of both the fathers and the prophets on earth. "As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more"—(Psalm ciii. 15, 16).

This inquiry calls a fact to the recollection of the people addressed, which relates to their immediate or remote progenitors, who in times past occupied their places and possessed their privileges, and the last in which line they had in recollection as cotemporaries of their early days, who according to their gracious or natural characters had shed their good or evil influence around and upon them; and the question is agitated as it regards their once evil or good example, the fear or hope once excited by them, their once powerful and far-spreading influence, healthy and refreshing as the dews of the morning, or pernicious as the blight and the mildew, impregnated and overwhelming with death, and destruction—"Your fathers, where are they?" And that people who are addressed had heard the Word—that Word of which (though the witnesses finish their course, labour, and testimony, and are taken to their rest,) it is testified—"But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever: and this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you"—(1 Peter i. 25). They had, in attending to the report, come before God as the people were wont to come, and had sat before the prophets as the Lord's people, and had heard His words at their mouth; yea, in too many instances, where no obedience was yielded to the truth through the Spirit, the prophets had been to them, or in their estimation, "a sa very lovely song of one who hath

a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument," though their word, in the quickening and sanctifying power of the Spirit, had no place in them. They might be conscious of not having received the testimony as they knew the prophets wished their hearers to receive it, and might feel some misgivings concerning the state of their souls, as not converted, though rightly informed; or there might be as many, on the other hand, utterly self-deceived, and mistake an assent to the Word for the reception of it, and reckon sentimental orthodoxy to be spiritual life; and thus they might be imposed upon themselves, and exercised in imposing upon others, by their profession of godliness without the experience of what is the riches of the glory of this mystery, "which is Christ in you the hope of glory"—(Colossians i. 27). On the contrary, there might be, and doubtless were, a remnant among them whose hearts the Lord had opened to receive the truth in love, and who had been "begotten again by the Word of truth, to be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures;" and to these the prophets would be dear for the Lord's sake, and for His word's sake—they being brought to this individual experience—"Thy Word hath quickened me"—(Psalm cxix. 50): "the law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver"—(Psalm cxix. 72).

But into the question, which concerns the prophets is engrafted a matter of fact, touching which, and to bring which to affecting remembrance of the hearers, the inquiry is made. The prophets had successively ended their labours, and entered into the joy of their Lord, either by the natural course of mortality to man, or by the summary and violent removals of persecution; and, in both cases, the church had been suffered to lose the benefit of their labours. From hence, and concerning this deprivation, arose the inquiry—"And the prophets, do they live for ever?"

The foregoing remarks, which unfold the amount of the signification, direct our attention to the intention, or object, of the questions proposed. These were not for the sake of the fathers, nor for the sake of the prophets, but for the sake of the people addressed. There does not appear to have been a sin, in the following matter recorded, rather the contrary, in love being essential to discipleship; nor does the remark of Jesus seem to involve a reproof, as of sin: "There followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children"—(Luke xxiii. 27, 28). But a sufficient peculiarity appears in it. In the expression of our griefs, to afford us admonition; that we express not our regrets and sorrows, or suffer them to run in such a direction, as to stand in opposition to God's will, and purposes, revealed in His Word. The Lord's rebuke to Peter was cutting, when, after a confession of His meditated sufferings unto death, "Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men"—(Matt. xvi. 22, 23). And so after His resurrection from the dead, and in contemplating His separation in bodily presence from His disciples, their subsequent sufferings, and the case of John in particular: "Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth Thee? Peter seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou Me. Then wept this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"—(John xxi. 20—23.)

In the text, the inquiries are proposed : " Your fathers, where are they ? and the prophets, do they live for ever ? " These are put for the health and profit of the souls of the hearers ; or, for their greater condemnation, if they will not receive warning. The inquiry concerning their fathers, however long they may have had influence, and used it, admonisheth them of it now having come to an end ; and that if they be sought unto for counsel and help, as they had been accustomed to be, their place, or power, or voice, among them would nowhere be found ! The question touching the prophets, as they are called to bear it in mind, sets before them the line of the successive pastors of the flock, husbandmen in the vineyard, builders of the spiritual temple, watchmen on the walls of the city, and their labours in which they have been exercised, according to the import of these divers similitudes ; and it gives admonition of these, as having gone by, and their work being with the Lord, and their judgment with their God ; whether these hearers, during such seasons of visitation, had heard, or had not heard, to profit, or had known the time of their visitation. That was a delineation of dark circumstances and prospects, relating, it is apprehended, to the period in question : " We see not our signs : there is no more any prophet : neither is there among us any that knoweth how long "—(Psalm lxxiv. 9). And the retrospective view of the whole matter is fearful, which the Lord Jesus Christ opened, and applied for warning to their successors in privileges and profession : " Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes : and some of them ye shall kill and crucify ; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city : that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord "—(Matt. xxiii. 34—39).

III. The permanent use of the record, as God speaks by it to us, and in our circumstances, is proposed to be noticed.

It is a matter of general acknowledgment, and beyond controversy and dispute, that we have been a highly favoured people ; and we have long possessed manifold means, and privileges, of a religious and spiritual nature ; and in many cases, it is trusted, have, through distinguishing and sovereign grace, derived from the use of them profit unto everlasting salvation. During these days of especial mercies, we have divers of those in grateful remembrance, who have departed in the faith, been gathered to the fathers, and entered, ripe for glory, into " the inheritance of the saints in light." These, for different periods, have ceased to be heard, and observed, and seen among us. Concerning all such, whose profiting has been made to appear, the question may be with propriety used, and with solemn pleasure as well as for profit : " Our fathers, where are they ? " And, as matter of admonition for comfort, from your ministers, to you who are their survivors, and followers of their faith—" Your fathers, where are they ? " Ministers of God are also in recollection, who have borne testimony to His truth, and laboured to the end of their appointed day, and entered into the presence, the rest, the joy of their Lord ; and these, from the divers scenes of their respective labours, and the peoples of their charge, (one only about five years back, from among ourselves,) have ceased to be heard, and to be observed, in their ministerial exercises ; where,

and among whomsoever they had been accustomed to preach the Gospel of peace ; to "bring glad tidings of good things ;" to entreat sinners, "as though God did beseech by them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God ;" and to all to whom it hath been given to believe through grace, to give assurance from the Divine Word, that "God hath made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." And as touching all opportunities of deriving profit from their ministry, these all are gone by, and are among those who were ; and have only left, as they had a responsibility to preach the Word, and thus make full proof of their ministry, the responsibility upon the surviving hearers, of having had in their hearing the manifestation of the truth, no profitable thing kept back, but a faithful "declaration of the whole counsel of God." And the permanent use of the question, as profitable for admonition, for exhortation, for warning to all survivors, is direct and manifest, and much to be impressed upon men's minds yea, upon our minds, for strong remembrance : "And the prophets, do they live for ever ?"

The present interesting and solemn occasion, when the departure of our late beloved and esteemed rector of this parish, (which, it is trusted, is somewhat deeply felt as a common bereavement,) is the present and pressing subject of memorial, gives occasion for the use of the inquiry ; as it may tend to awaken our deepest attention to the passing days, and connections, and opportunities, and privileges, all bringing their responsibilities, and bearing us onward to eternal judgment : "your fathers, where are they ? and the prophets do they live for ever ?" As when the inquiry, in another Scripture, is announced concerning the hasting time, and directed to those having a charge of the house, or the city ; the reply tends to action, to expectation, to motion, to sleepless vigilance : "He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night ? watchman, what of the night ? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night : if ye will inquire, inquire ye ; return, come"—(Isaiah xxi. 11, 12). So in these questions, which refer to the passing away of our fathers, in the faith, or in the flesh ; and touching the quick transition of the prophets, as in their rapid succession they have been charged with words of Divine authority, and everlasting consequence, all the things belonging to our peace, which, in the case of the impenitent and unbelieving, are about to be speedily hid for ever from their eyes ; the object, desired to be obtained for profit to the audience, is an awakened concern and conviction in the careless : "All things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light : for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light"—(Eph. v. 13, 14). In the inquirers, an encouraged and increasing attention to fervent exhortation : "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him : and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"—(Isaiah lv. 6, 7). And in established believers through grace, increased zeal of holy walking, abundant fruitfulness, and prayerful circumspection : "That, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep : for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand : let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light"—(Romans xiii. 11, 12). "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end : that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises"—(Heb. vi. 11, 12). This will draw gain for eternity from the losses of time, as those made wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY VIEWED IN RELATION TO  
THE DEATH OF HIS PEOPLE.

*A Funeral Sermon,*

BY THE

REV. GEORGE WILKINS.

PREACHED IN NEW BROAD STREET CHAPEL,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 17, 1847.

On the Death of George Firmin, Esq., lately one of the Deacons of the Church in  
New Broad Street Chapel.

*"In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away: and the mighty shall be taken away without hand."*—Job xxxiv. 20.

THE consternation and excitement, brethren, naturally awakened by an event like the present, is here, you observe, strikingly delineated by the pen of inspiration. The passage, viewed in its connection, describes the impartiality of God in the exercise of His rightful authority with regard to the subjects of death; and by a slight effort of imagination we may consider it as a description of the disquietude and anguish occasioned by one such occurrence in the midst of a social circle. It would be obviously improper for us to dwell on such circumstances, but a more vivid illustration of the point of the passage is perhaps not to be found than in the solemn event which has occasioned its selection.\* As though in letter and in spirit the text was then to be fulfilled, "the people were troubled at midnight"—while that hour witnessed the departure of our friend from time to eternity, and from earth to heaven.

The text, you will observe, is part of the argument employed by Elihu to establish the principle of the Divine equity in the government of the universe. He insinuates that the suffering patriarch had at least implied certain reflections on the character of the Deity, and he remonstrates with him to show, that the Governor of the universe could not be unjust. This conviction, he seems to have imagined, might even be assumed as universally and infallibly true; any opposite conclusion, he intimates, would be contrary both to experience and to fact. Even a mere earthly ruler, it is suggested, is not to be arraigned and condemned at the mere pleasure of his subjects; and how much less He "that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor! for they are all the work of His hands." "In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away; and the mighty shall be taken away without hand."

Many and various, brethren, are the ideas naturally suggested alike by the argument and the passage itself. We shall fix but on two; and may He at whose shrine we are mingling, give aid and success.

It suggests, in the first place, the sovereignty and impartiality of God; and, secondly, the weakness and dependance of man.

\* The deceased was seized with a fit of apoplexy while engaged in family worship. His pastor, the other deacons, with their partners, were spending the evening with him.

## I. IT SUGGESTS THE SOVEREIGNTY AND IMPARTIALITY OF GOD.

And what themes, brethren, are these for man to contemplate! They awe to silence, and yet they stimulate to love. Sovereignty, in the highest and most proper sense, belongs exclusively to Jehovah. Man sometimes assumes it, and over a narrow and limited sphere exercises its prerogatives, but we have this morning to notice the agency of Him "by whom kings reign," and whose authority and empire is universal. With this view, then, no bounds are set to His influence, and no department is free from His control. Our consideration of it is, however, prescribed by circumstances. We shall but look at the department of death—that wide domain which comprehends the whole family of man.

It must be distinctly observed however, brethren, that the *originating cause* of death, is not Divine sovereignty, but our *sin*. It is only in relation to the circumstances of death we thus regard it. Death is the penalty of a violated law. "By man came sin, and by man came death." "By sin, death entered into the world." Mortality is therefore alike the effect and the evidence of sin—we see in it man's guilt. And as a further proof that Divine sovereignty has not *originated death*, we see the same power in the Gospel working in opposition to it. In salvation we see God's sovereignty as the *originating cause*; but in death man's guilt. The dominion of the king of terrors, brethren, may, in a sense, be affirmed to be not only wide, but universal; yet it must be still remembered, that his authority is under control. Jehovah is Himself universally and exclusively supreme; and the idea to be maintained, therefore, is, that while death has not originated in sovereignty, yet all the circumstances are controlled by it. God issues His mandate, and death executes the commission at His bidding. The arrow flies to the heart, when the word of the Sovereign is given. Not a moment before,—not a moment later. Death stands as a willing messenger at the footstool of Omnipotence; he waits his orders from the throne and readily obeys them. He never goes until his commission is received.

With these remarks, then, we contemplate Jehovah this morning, not as a mere spectator amidst the ravages and wastes of death; not as from His throne, amidst its unutterable splendour, gazing upon the dying, or upon the fields of the already dead; but we contemplate Him to-day, as having in His hand the sceptre of universal power—"the very issues of life and death."

In exercising the prerogatives of this authority, then, we may remark—

1. *That God determines the hour of dissolution.*

When the messenger shall come, whether it shall be at midnight, or at break of day, the time is fixed, and it is fixed by Him. "He opens, and no man shuts; He shuts, and no man opens." Oh! it was in Patmos, brethren, amidst the dazzling scenes of that mysterious vision which was beheld by John, ere the book of Revelation was completed, that this emphatic statement was declared: "I have the keys of hell and of death;" intimating, that without Him life could not be given, and could not be withdrawn. He hath all power over the invisible state of death, and over death itself. The casualties which we sometimes speak of, are casualties to us, but they are not casualties to God. All are known to Him. They are necessary parts of the general system which His wisdom regulates, and which His power controls. Where would be an anchor hold, brethren, amidst the ever varying circumstances of this busy world—where, an anchor hold for even one of its inhabitants, on which he might stay his hopes, were we left to any other truth than this? Hence, as though to hush the turbulence of human passion, and to quell the rising fears of the agitated bosom, one sentiment from heaven has been uttered for the world to listen to: "Neither does a sparrow fall, nor a hair loosen

and descend, without your heavenly Father's knowledge." There is, brethren, no confusion in what God does, or even in what He permits to be done. Events are not isolated, but connected with others, the links of which are seen by Him, though invisible to us. Let us enter, then, the chamber of the dying, or, it may be, the chamber of the dead, it is but ours to utter the sentiment, that "God has done it."

We observe next—

2. *That God determines, or controls, the instruments by which life shall be ended.*

Whether it shall be by long lingering sickness, in which the countenance becomes pale and wan, and the frame diseased and emaciated. Whether it shall be by a sudden stroke, giving instant exit to the spirit into regions of light and immortality, it is God that fixes the inevitable hour.

Here, brethren, we see *human instrumentality*—there, we see no visible means. Here the burning fever with its hectic flush—and there no apparent indication of approaching death. A word—one utterance of His will—power—without an agent seen. He does it with infinite ease. "In a moment shall they die, the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away: and the mighty shall be taken away without hand." And where, is exemption permitted? We have, indeed, two instances, those of Enoch and Elijah, in which by a mysterious energy the persons interested saw no death,—felt none of its pangs,—knew none of its conflicts; but the annals of the world besides contain no record of a third. One onward course from the beginning has been that of death. The "pale horse" has passed and is still passing through every rank, while he who sits upon it deals out death on every hand. No bribe purchases freedom, and no penury secures pity. The exalted monarch, and the debased and trembling slave: the rich man clothed in purple, and the poor man decked in poverty, are alike struck down. Universal as is sin, so universal must be death. "One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them."

See then, the impartiality of God. "Death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And even now is his work being executed. When least anticipated, often his approach is near. Walking in darkness, he spreadeth desolation. The family and the church, each feels in turn his withering strokes. Oh! whose heart has he not torn, and whose hearth has he not desolated? Widows sit in sadness, and churches clothe themselves in mourning; deacons fall beneath him, and pastors loved and honoured, are not more secure. But, brethren, one truth cheers amidst the gloom; and it is this—"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Though at His bidding they fall, whether by this instrument or that, or whether they be "taken without hand," yet is it but the gathering of their spirits to their final rest. We hear to-day the gladdening sentiment, as it comes from Heaven and reverberates in Patmos, "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." And with this, brethren, though we see death thinning our ranks, yet must we say, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" "His eyes are on the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings."

But while we recognize the supremacy of the Deity in determining the hour of His people's death—and regulating the instruments that are to effect it—we must also note—

3. *That God is uninfluenced by the consideration of merely present consequences.*

As the all-wise Disposer of events, He cannot allow Himself to be affected by these. They are all foreseen by Him. He can well understand

the widow's tears, and the children's mourning; the people *may* "be troubled at midnight," and a long train of apparent evils may follow in his track; but His hand cannot be withheld because of them. Death is a penalty that must be universally rendered. It has to do with justice and with law; hence, while administering equitable government, that which is particular must not be permitted to impede a universal good. Such, brethren, would be weakness in the Deity, not wisdom; it would be feeling, not principle. Let us not conclude, however, because of this, that the great God is indifferent to such results. He is not. He feels with the widow, and He pities the bereaved; but He has a purpose to be accomplished beyond their private feelings and interest. He must regard the entire relation of things. Death, as shown, has not originated with Him; but as it exists, His procedure must be such as shall subordinate it to higher results. He is forbidden to be moved by circumstances, and to change His intended course. His purposes must ripen, and His plans go on to completion.

The mystery, if there be any, must remain for the present inscrutable; He must even continue to *appear* unkind, if we think Him so; and our fondest hopes must still be frustrated. On earth, brethren, the Almighty will render no account; but in heaven, amidst its pure, undying light, He will reveal the present secrets, the hidden and dark mysteries, at least enough to satisfy us "that He has done all things well." All that He now says to us, comes as in one short sentence from His throne, "Be still, and know that I am God." And in this one sentence, is contained enough! God acts with reason; He is a reason to Himself. Even now, could we pierce the veil of dark futurity, even now should we believe, that sovereignty is regulated by love, and a tender consideration pervades all.

We know not the day of our death, brethren, and well for us we do not; "but our times are in His hands;" and whatever therefore be the casualties which may cause our departure, whether death approaches us in forms terrific, by slow and lingering steps, or suddenly, all is in wisdom and in mercy too. If death be sudden, as in the case of our dear departed friend, the glory bursting on the vision will be sudden also. Spared the pains of dying strife and last farewells, the transition is but sleep, and the waking is eternal day.

Thus have we endeavoured briefly to illustrate Jehovah's sovereignty in the department of death. We now proceed to notice—

## II. THE WEAKNESS AND DEPENDANCE OF MAN.

We imagine, here, my dear hearers, little need be said, and the time forbids it. Permit us only to remark, that the contrast appears to be tremendous between the feebleness of the creature and the majesty of the Creator. "Man dieth and wasteth away;" "he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down." Jehovah need not employ the lightning to consume, or the earthquake to swallow him up. He has but to suspend life, and it terminates. Death with a steady hand guides the ploughshare of ruin along the busy track of life. Nothing is so fragile as the life of man. None can calculate on the certain possession of a day, an hour, or even of a moment. "The mighty are taken away without hand." The cypress mingles with the waving plumes. The man of business receives his summons, and is gone. Oh! how often, ere we have been warned of it, has the cheerful aspect of our friends been turned to languor and to death, the limbs stiffened into marble; and death has come where we had anticipated life and joy!

"Death's thousand doors stand open,"

and all its avenues are crowded with its victims. "Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" We ask the question sometimes, brethren, in awful sad-



ness, "Where is he?" Nature gives no answer—philosophy no answer—only revelation can. It flings its light upon the future, and as in one word utters *eternity*—he is in eternity. The question is soon solved—he is in eternity—in heaven or in hell.

"A point of time, a moment's space,  
Removes me to yon heavenly place,  
Or shuts me up in hell."

And here, brethren, is yet the inquiry, "Where is he?" We pursue it no longer, but looking upwards, we have no doubt, *our friend is there!* Into yon happy world our friend has already entered. Yes! mingling with that throng in bliss he has found his resting-place in heaven. His body we left in yonder sepulchre, but his spirit is to-day at home. His widow weeps, but not he; his children, but not he; the church, but not he.

"Our brother the haven hath gained,  
Out-flying the tempest and wind;  
His rest he hath sooner obtained,  
And left his companions behind;  
Still toss'd on a sea of distress,  
Hard toiling to make the glad shore,  
Where all is assurance and peace,  
And sorrow and sin are no more."

To us, brethren, loud is the voice that utters, "Be ye also ready."

And now it remains that something be said of him whom we mourn. His record is on high, and though no eulogy of ours can add one other element of joy to his already joyous spirit, yet friendship may utter his excellencies as well as cherish them for imitation. We may weave a garland even amidst the cypress of this solemn hour, but we intend only to utter that which shall illustrate the grace of God, and magnify that grace. Our friend first came among us nine years since, and with his beloved and now surviving partner, joined the fellowship of the church on the 3d of January, 1839. On the 3d of December, 1840, he was elected by the church to be one of its deacons. On that evening, four were chosen, but since then, three are gone to their rest. His character deservedly stood high amongst us. He had a mind of considerable power, well balanced and cultivated, and his judgment such as his friends could usually confide in. His place in the sanctuary on the Sabbath was seldom vacant; never, if well, and in town. His attendance at our prayer meetings was the same; and you, brethren, many of you, know *how* he prayed. His fervent addresses at the Mercy-seat, with the utterances of adoration, must have often struck you. They indicated that for prayer he had no common gift, and as audibly conveyed the impression, that his soul was watered from the fountain head. His interest in the prosperity of the church was strong and ardent. None more fervently desired its progress, and none felt more deeply any symptoms of declining energy.

As a deacon, in the discharge of his office, many of you can testify, brethren, with what fidelity, yet with what tender sympathy, he conversed with you relative to Christian fellowship and communion. The *active* duties of that office, in other respects, he knew to be discharged, especially, by our long honoured friend, *his senior*, of whom, brethren, were he not now present, too much could not be said. May God long spare our deacons to us! Our friend was the ready and willing, and I may add, generous contributor to all the institutions connected with this place of worship. His hand and his heart were always ready at the call of duty,—for the claims of man and for those of God. His surviving brethren I know will bear me out in saying, that they found him always ready to co-operate, always kind, and always open. They stood high in his esteem, and warm in his affections. There were no discords among

them, but he joined with them, and they with him, 'as men fearing God, and loving each other. The bond is now broken, but God hath burst the tie, and not themselves.

As a friend, we all found him friendly. One little group especially amongst us knew his value in the social circle. Month after month we met in our *book society*; there he opened his heart, and there we saw the Christian and the friend, and felt at home together. He loved to mingle with us, and we with him. But we feel to-day that we have met with him on earth for the last time.

And now, brethren, may not the *pastor* bear his testimony also? He loved him with the tenderness of a son; and he received from his lamented friend all the kindness of a father. Often has he been cheered by his benignant smile, and made glad by his tender and sympathising kindness. In the vestry, in the house of God, in his own house, at the family circle, he who now bears this tribute to his memory, found him a kind, affectionate, and upright friend, ever the same,—nor less, dear brethren, (members of the church,) we speak it thankfully, nor less the honoured brethren he has left behind. If our departed friend had his share of the ordinary infirmities of our imperfect nature, (and who ever lived without them?)—let these be recorded by those by whom they were witnessed—or rather let *them* be forgotten, and the excellencies by which they were far outnumbered, be spoken of and imitated.

But we must come to the final scene. Our last interview with our beloved brother was in the evening of Wednesday week. It was the Deacons' meeting; we met at Mr. Firmin's house, where we had always been received with much cordiality, and with much hospitality. The evening was spent happily, conversing on various matters connected with the interests of the church. He had prayed with us, some of you remember, in the vestry, only on the previous Monday evening, and for the first time attended on the morning of that day as one of your messengers at the Congregational Fund Board. Matters of church business being over, the family were summoned by him for Christian worship; and while, brethren, I was uttering the sentiments of prayer; while we were kneeling together, the last messenger executed his commission. Death had come, but oh! in what a posture did it find him!—with his pastor, his fellow-deacons and their wives, with his own family, all on their knees at the throne of grace. Disease at once rapidly performed its work. Medical aid was of course immediately procured. Our friend, now with us. (Dr. Cooke,) promptly came to him, but skill was unavailing. You, brethren, may judge somewhat of our consternation; we "were troubled," and near midnight all passed away in sadness. Anxious, however, to be with my friend, either whether he should be restored, or when he should die, I returned to his couch, and at half-past twelve he expired; I might say, he was "taken without hand."

"In vain our fancy strives to paint  
The moment after death;  
The glory that surrounds the saint  
When he resigns his breath.

Faith strives, but here our efforts fail,  
To trace the spirit's flight;  
No eye can pierce within the veil,  
Which hides that world of light.

Thus much, and this is all we know,  
They are completely blest,  
Have done with sin, and care, and woe,  
And with their Saviour rest."

And brethren, we now turn from the dead to speak again to the living.

We speak to the members of the church ; there is an utterance for you : " work," oh ! work, " while it is called to-day ; the night cometh when no man can work." And you, the family whom he loved, and the children for whom he prayed, there is an utterance this morning for you. A father's tears may not have availed, his desires may not have availed, his prayers may not have availed, but shall not his voice from the sepulchre prevail ? Oh ! how he desired and longed for your salvation and your well-being ! His counsels, my dear friends belonging to his family—his counsels are over, but not his example. Whatever his failings, you never questioned his piety. Yield, then, to impression, and meet him in heaven. How solemn a thing, my dear brethren, is death ! How solemn is it to die ! To the sinner it is so especially—I say, to the sinner, because though death may overtake alike the wicked and the good, the believer and the impenitent, yet it is only death to the Christian while it is destruction to the ungodly. " There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." Their decease, whether the result of lingering disease, or sudden calamity, whether it take place at the rising of the sun, or in the dark hour of midnight, is but falling asleep in Christ ; a departure more speedy than anticipated, because the Sovereign had sent the commission. But when the sinner dies, his death is destruction, inevitable destruction ; he dies as he lived, " without God and without hope in the world." Is this, my dear hearers, the contingency in which any of you are placed to-day ? Is it true, that no pledge has been given, that ere the day closes you shall not be gone ? Then, my unconverted hearers, whatever your age may be, if unconverted, how solemn your condition, and how imperative the duty of immediate repentance ! Death—the sepulchre—the preacher—Christ himself—all join to urge the necessity of repentance. " Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

" Be ye also ready." This is our joy to-day amidst tears and sadness, our friend " was ready," he slept in Jesus ; he has passed from us ; he has reached his blessedness, and is happy for ever. Voices from all worlds enforce the exhortation—" That ye be not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

NOTES OF LECTURES  
ON  
**PROPERTY AND PAUPERISM.**  
DELIVERED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
BY THE  
**REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.**

LECTURE IX.

We wish to remove some mistakes and misapprehensions which prevail on the subject of Pauperism, and the difficulties attending its overthrow. Some look on the removal of Compulsory Pauperism as a chimerical imagination.\* On this subject I have written much;† and, rather than go over the ground again, I think it better to read extracts principally from periodicals‡, connecting them by remarks. Conceive a man placed in the middle of an English parish; and how wild would appear his assertion, that the poor would be better off without Poor Laws! In contrast with an active man, well acquainted with business, the former would be esteemed "theoretical," and the latter "useful." But suppose these men had been brought together before the Poor Laws were introduced; and had reasoned on the subject before the Act of Elizabeth.§ Even anterior to all experience, the following considerations

\* See Note to Lecture 5, Page 116.

† In addition to various portions of Dr. Chalmers's writings, which we have already had occasion to point out, and others we may yet have to indicate, a whole volume (21) of his Works is devoted to Pauperism; being entitled—"The sufficiency of a Parochial System, without a Poor-rate, for the Right Management of the Poor. With Two Essays on Cognate Subjects." The First (on the "Application of Statistics to Moral and Economical Subjects") was read at the Glasgow Meeting of the "British Association for the Advancement of Science" (1840); the Second (on the "Distinction, both in Principle and Effect, between a Legal Charity for the Relief of Indigence, and a Legal Charity for the Relief of Disease") was read before the "Royal Institute of France," of which the Author was a Corresponding Member.

‡ These periodicals were—Nos. 55, 58, and 66 of the "Edinburgh Review," for March 1817, February 1818, and May 1820. (Volume 28, Page 1; Volume 29, Pages 261 and 498; Volume 33, Page 382.) The articles, four in number, are republished in Volume 20 of Dr. Chalmers's Works ("Political Economy," Volume 2), Pages 247 to 384. Of the article ("Management of the Poor in Glasgow") at Page 498 of the "Edinburgh Review" for February 1818 (No. 58, Volume 29) only the first half, down to the words "one of the members" (Page 499), is by Dr. Chalmers; the rest being, as he observed, "what Jeffrey chose to add." In this added portion, Dr. C. has marked, in our copy, the following passage as particularly erroneous:—"The area of England and Wales, according to the latest authorities, appears to be 57,960 square miles, or 37,094,400 statute acres; wherefore the number of inhabitants in each square mile, containing 640 acres, averages 175 persons. The greater proportion of the population of England and Wales appears to be employed in manufactures; there being 770,199 families returned [as] employed in agriculture, and 969,632 in trades, manufactures, and handicraft; besides 413,316 other families." (Page 501.)

§ "The statutes antecedent to the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, were generally directed to the relief of the impotent poor, by the contributions of the church and the aims of the charitable; and to the suppression of vagrancy and idleness."—*Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Laws. Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed July 4, 1817.* Quoted at Page 285, Volume 29, of the "Edinburgh Review" (No 58; February, 1818); and in Volume 20 of Dr. Chalmers's Works ("Political Economy," Volume 2), Pages 338 and 339. "It appears, from this important document, that the principle of Compulsory Provision for the Poor took its rise with the enactment of very harsh and barbarous laws for the suppression of vagrancy;—that, by these laws (which were directed against 'strong beggars, persons whole and mighty in body'), such an offence was visited with slavery, mutilations, and death—that permission to beg, however, was extended to the impotent poor within certain districts—and that at length, with a view to prevent the burden of their support from falling exclusively on the charitable, an Act was passed in the Fifth of Elizabeth, whereby Justices in each parish were empowered, along with the churchwardens, to assess for a weekly sum those who were unwilling to contribute. By a Statute of the Forty-Third of the same reign, those persons were vested with the power, first, to provide for the gratuitous relief of these who were unable to work; and, secondly, to find work

might have occurred to the former, as contra-indicating the establishment of such Laws: 1. They were untried. 2. They would wrest from the hands of Nature the management of a case for which she had provided by certain principles (of compassion) which they would tend to enfeeble and suppress. 3. They would relax industry and foresight, the obligations of relationship, and the sympathy and mutual dependence of neighbours. 4. They might reduce the private ministrations of the wealthy. 5. The publicity given to relief would be painful to delicate and deserving sufferers. From these various probabilities, the man we have supposed might withhold his approbation of a system so uncertain and hazardous; and if his sturdier antagonist resolutely persisted in maintaining the wisdom of the proposed regulations, which of the two ought to have been called a "theorist?" But the experiment suggested has actually been carrying on for two centuries; and our two political reasoners, if they could rise from their graves, would find the subject of debate really exemplified;—experience and proof, instead of experiment and probability. In England they would find a cold public administration of relief dissolving domestic ties and kindly charities; the Border parishes would be found augmenting their expenditure, without increasing the comforts of the poor; while, in the North, they would see a high-minded peasantry rearing their families and fostering their aged parents out of their own resources. Would not our doubting friend be entitled to look on these various parishes as archives on which, since he left the world, the finger of Time had graven the correctness of all his anticipations? Would not his claims to "practical" wisdom be proudly vindicated; and his antagonist be convicted as a most unsound and precipitate "theorist?" This shows—what it is of great importance you should understand—to which of the parties the term "*theorist*," and to which that of "*practical wisdom*," ought to be applied.\* All the distress, machine-breaking,† and other outrages of which we hear, will be found confined to those parts of the kingdom where a compulsory provision for Pauperism prevails, and where allowances are most liberal.

We wish to impress on you the distinction between the *natural*, and the *artificial* or *legal* difficulties, in the way of abolishing Compulsory Pauperism.‡ The *artificial* difficulties are great; but the *natural* difficulties are none. There is no doubt as to the success of the experiment, if tried; but the difficulty is to get people to try it. It is a mistake to suppose, that a man who is implicated in the details of a system, is better able to judge of it than another. I think his position has an unfavourable effect. A man who is looking over a machine, is better able to understand it, than a man who is working in it. This was dwelt on by Lord Brougham, in his speech (in the House of Lords) on Chancery Reform. Nothing could be more beautiful than his allusion to the nymph, who was turned into a laurel while flying from the god of light.§

tools and materials. This Statute continues to be the fundamental and operative law of the realm, on this important subject."—(*Chalmers's Works, Volume 20 (Political Economy, Volume 2), Pages 299 and 300; and "Edinburgh Review" for February 1818, (No. 58, Volume 29,) Page 261.*)

\* For an amplification of this striking visit from the dead, see the "*Edinburgh Review*" for February, 1818 (No. 58, Volume 29), Pages 261 to 265; or Volume 20 of Dr. Chalmers's Works ("*Political Economy*," Volume 2), Pages 300 to 305.

† A valuable Note (B) on Machinery, will be found in the Appendix to the Lecturer's "*Political Economy*" (Page 473); or in Volume 20 of his Works, Page 55.

‡ For a Chapter (14) on this subject, see Volume 2 of the "*Christian and Civic Economy*," Page 225; or Volume 15 of Dr. Chalmers's Works ("*Christian and Economic Polity*," Volume 2), Page 134.

§ Apollo, as the god of poetry, is crowned with laurel; while, as the charioteer of the sun, he is on ill terms with that shrub, which flourishes best in the shade. Out of these materials, the Greek contrived the following tale:—Daphne was the Daughter of Peneus, a river in Tempe. She was beloved by Apollo; who, on her fleeing from his addresses, pursued her, and had nearly overtaken her when, appealing to Jupiter for help, she was changed by him into a laurel, for which *Daphne* (*δαφνη*) is the Greek name, and which was thenceforward consecrated to Apollo.—See Baldwin's "*Pantheon*," Chapter 23 (Pages 205 to 207 of the Fourth Edition); or Ovid's "*Metamorphoses*," Book 1, Lines 452, &c. (Fable 9.)

## MORAL ARITHMETIC.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. THOMAS DALE, M.A.

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER, 31, 1847.

The Sunday after the Death of W. Davison, Esq., by falling from the  
Whispering Gallery of the Cathedral.

*"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."*  
Psalm xc. 12.

THESE are among the solemn words which our church has appointed to be pronounced over the ashes of the dead, when "man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets;" when "earth" returns "to earth," and "dust to dust." In this impressive portion of her ritual, she has respect, not only to the dead, who have gone down into silence, but to the living, who may lay it yet to heart; and while she gives utterance to a charitable hope that the departed, if not formally or practically excommunicated, is with Christ, she would dismiss the sorrowing friends and relatives with the seasonable and earnest admonition, that they, too, prepare themselves to rest in Him, as their hope is that their brother doth. Thus the tears which are poured forth upon the sepulchre of those whom we have loved and lost, may tend to the purifying of the soul, and the amendment and the profit of the living may arise from the commemoration of the dead.

We accordingly, though not now grouped as mourners around the open sepulchre, but congregated as worshippers in the temple of the Lord—in a temple which has itself been too recently the scene of death, and of which the consecrated pavement has been stained with human blood—we may well address ourselves to the consideration of our latter end, which Moses, the man of God, or rather God himself by Moses, declared to be true wisdom, and which, rightly pursued, while it detracts nothing from the true enjoyment of the "life that now is," will be found the only effectual provision for the happiness of "the life that is to come."

Let us, then, consider, first, the reason assigned for making timely and immediate preparation for our end, as implied in the phrase "numbering our days;" and, secondly, the nature of the preparation itself, which is expressed as the "applying our hearts unto wisdom." And oh! my brethren, if we need any stimulant to the devout and serious consideration of such a subject, let reason herself supply it; for she will tell us—and her words must derive added energy from all experience—that they who cannot be sure that they shall live, ought at least to look well to it that they be fit to die.

I. To "number our days," then, in the sense of the Psalmist, is something more than to admit, in mere general terms, the brevity and uncertainty of human life. This must be done by all, if only because there are none who can put away from themselves the necessity of doing it. The fact is so palpable, so familiar, so notorious in the case of others, that they who are most reluctant as to the admission cannot but acknowledge its probability in relation to themselves. The "life" which is "a vapour" to some, cannot be a substance to any; the death may be at hand to many, which is eventually certain to all.

To "number our days," then, is not simply to take the reckoning and admeasurement of human life. This has been done already in holy Scripture, where it is said, "the days of our years are threescore and ten, and though men be so strong that they come to fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow, so soon passeth it away, and we are gone." Nor yet is it, in the world's phrase, to calculate the chances of survivorship, which any man may do in the instance of the aggregate, but which no man can do in the case of the individual. But it is to take the measure of our days as compared with the work to be performed, with the provision to be laid up for eternity, with the preparation to be made for death, with the precaution to be taken against judgment. It is to estimate human life by the purposes to which it should be applied, by the eternity to which it must conduct and in which it shall at last be absorbed. Under this aspect it is, that David contemplates man when he says, "Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before Thee," and then proceeds to include in

this comprehensive estimate even those whose days have been the longest upon earth: "Verily, every man at his best estate is altogether vanity." Ah! my brethren, this moral arithmetic, this computation of human life, is a science which we are taught by the experience of God's providence as well as by the declarations of God's word; we should learn it not only here by that fearful catastrophe at the remembrance of which we still shudder, not only by the graves on which we tread, by the monuments of the departed on which we gaze; we should learn it from much that meets us even in the world—from the garments of woe, from the funeral knell, from the mourners who go about the streets, from the chasms which exist in many a social and domestic circle, the light of which is extinct, the charm dissolved for ever; we should learn it not only from the bereavements of the mortal around, but from the aspirations of the immortal within; not only from that which proclaims in every direction around us, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity," but from that also which whispers in the heart, which whispers in every one of your hearts, "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after death the judgment," "the body shall return to the earth as it was, but the spirit unto God who gave it."

There are, then, two main reasons wherefore we should address ourselves, and that without delay, to the "numbering" of "our days," which is the consideration of our latter end; and the first and most obvious of these is the fear of God.

The first reason why we are to "number our days" is the fear of God, regarded as an Avenger to execute wrath upon every soul of man that doeth evil, and concerning whom, when thus regarded, the apostle Paul has declared, "Our God is a consuming fire." "When 'I consider,'" says the patriarch Job, "I am afraid of Him," and hence if any of ourselves are not afraid—if there be here the professed infidel or the bold blasphemer, it is only because they do not "consider." And this may be readily illustrated by an example taken from temporal things, and based upon the words of the Lord Himself, when He said, "Fear not them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear Him."

Now it will not be questioned for an instant, while we listen to this impressive exhortation from the lips which "spake as never man spake," and take into our reckoning the attributes of Deity to which it refers, that God is incomparably more to be feared than men, being at once possessed of omniscience to detect all crimes, and of omnipotence to punish all. But let us just suppose for an instant that any one of us were from this time to be placed before the eye and beneath the arm of man, as each believes himself to be placed continually before the eye and beneath the arm of God; let us suppose that one of our own feeble race were from this time to be ever with us as the delegate of a supreme and retributory Power, deputed to scrutinise every action, to register every word, to expose every error, and to punish every fault; how warily, how circumspectly should we pursue our path through life, even though watched over by a sagacity that might be eluded, and crossed only by a power that might be escaped! We should from that moment move about among mankind like beings of another world, abstracted from things around with which others were conversant, indifferent to things in which others were interested, and absorbed in moody meditation with which others had no sympathy. We should speak only in measured words, and act only from deliberate thought. If ever a smile passed over our countenance, it would be cold and cheerless as the sickly moonbeam, and would give place in a moment to blacker darkness than before. We should live as doomed creatures, feeling not only that our breath was in our nostrils, but that only a step intervened between us and death. And yet, with one important variation; all this is more than hypothetically true: God is "about our path and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways." "He hath beset us behind and before," and laid His hand upon us. "Whither can we go from His Spirit, and whither can we flee from His presence?" "Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord." We all know this, and did any pretend not to know it at all, nature would rise up in insistent protestation against the falsehood. How can it be conceived that the light of the sun could be reflected where God Himself is not? How can the waters of God's ocean flow to any distant place where God Himself is not? Where His works are, there must the great Creator be. God is in all, and by all, and through all; and so long as the light falls even in this holy place upon the vacant look, upon the wandering gaze, and upon the lips that are preparing for the utterance of falsehood, upon the bosom hiding iniquity within itself, upon the heart full of "hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness," who does not perceive that there

must be also the omniscient and inevitable eye which not only falls on every heart, but pierces through every heart on which it falls? We read in this very psalm, that He hath "set our misdeeds before Him, our secret sins in the light of His countenance;" and were God extreme to mark what is done amiss, and were the penalty dealt out in strict proportion to the sin, which of us would not find cause to add, "When Thou art angry all our days are gone; we spend our years as a tale that is told?"

But the property of God is always to have mercy; judgment is His "strange act." He does not "deal with us after our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities." Were it otherwise, how often, we may suppose, would the house of prayer exhibit the punishment of the very crimes upon which the eye of God looks in that house? God looks in this place upon the specious dissembler, upon the designing hypocrite, upon the man whose form of religion is only assumed as a blind to others, or practised as an imposition upon himself; and if the sword that even here is uplifted do not fall, if the bow that is bent do not propel the arrow from the string, it is not that there is any lack of provocation to the righteous displeasure of the most holy God (alas! how should there be in such a place as this?), but that His long-suffering still waits as it did in the days of old; that God pities the infirmities, while He searches the hearts of men; that He would rather spare as a Father, while He executes just judgment as a King; that He pacifies the wrath which would otherwise be a minister of death, and restrains the indignation which would otherwise overwhelm the mightiest of sinners. Yes, it is His goodness that endureth still. God is as patient as He is strong; though God is provoked every day. And oh! that His long-suffering might yet awaken the sinner to repentance before the day of grace is past, and the time of salvation gone for ever!

The other reason, therefore, why preparation should be made at once, is the greatness of God's mercy. "There is forgiveness with Thee," says the Psalmist, "that Thou mightest be feared;" and God, says the apostle, is "willing that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." In grace, as in nature, God has done His part: in the one case He has given medicine to heal the sickness of the body, and in the other the pure and precious blood of Christ to atone for the corruption of the soul. But, then, He does not in either case compel the application of the remedy. That remedy, indeed, in both cases, is obvious, and in spiritual things it is unfailing; but, whilst God intreats men to choose life as an option or alternative, He does not impose it on them as a necessity. "They that hate me," said the heavenly Wisdom, "love death;" and what said He who was the Wisdom of God embodied in the form of man? "Ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life." Oh! then, my brethren, let it be borne in mind, that while to procrastinate the supplication for God's mercy is to provoke the stroke of God's wrath, yet to deprecate His justice is to invite His love; to confess and to forsake our sin is to find mercy. "Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Ever, then, let us bear in mind that the goodness of God, unless it lead to repentance, will but aggravate our condemnation; and, since we must confess that "our days on earth are but as a shadow, and none abiding," oh! let all learn that true wisdom which God alone can teach, that we may realise our proper character as strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and provide against that time when "the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved," provide what grace alone will enable us to provide, "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

II. We are now to consider, in the second place, the nature or the preparation required; which is thus expressed—the "applying our hearts unto wisdom." A more exact and expressive rendering of this phrase will be found in the marginal reading: "So teach us to number our days that we may cause our hearts to come unto wisdom." New wisdom may be defined, in general terms, as the choice of the most important object, and the pursuit of it by the most effectual means; and the object must be the same with the "end of faith," which is "the salvation of the soul;" and what can the means be but the study and application of the Word of God? "This is life eternal," said the Lord himself, "to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent;" and the knowledge of the Lord is obtained by the study of His Word: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me." And in this most expressive phrase of "causing the heart to come unto wisdom," it is clear that the proper work of man is discriminated from that which can be the work of the Spirit of God alone. Man is not, you will observe, enjoined to attain unto wis-



dom, to acquire it from others, or to realise it for himself, as though he could accomplish this by his own efforts or exertions; he is simply to "cause his heart to come unto wisdom," to go in quest of it, to seek it in the way and by the means which God has appointed; to "ask that he may receive," to "seek that he may find," and "to knock" that the door of salvation may be opened unto him. "If any man lack wisdom," says the apostle James, "let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." The tree of life is, so to speak, in the midst of us, visible to every eye, accessible to every hand, in the garden of God's Word. Its branches are laden, as it were, with nutritious fruit, and even the leaves of it are for "the healing of the nations." It is man's part to put forth his hand, and to pluck, and eat, and live for ever. But if he will not do this, if he deliberately choose the evil and refuse the good, if he will rather live upon ashes because "a deceived heart hath turned him aside," if he prefer the wild vine of this world, whose grapes are grapes of gall and whose fruit clusters of wormwood, whom can he inculcate but himself in the placing of this poison in the soul? Whom can he blame but himself at the time when wisdom shall cry no more, when the day of grace shall be ended, and the offers of wisdom and salvation shall be withdrawn? There is now a distinct and decisive pledge, that whoever will come unto wisdom, wisdom shall come unto him. All is provided on the part of God, that man's frailty can require or his necessities demand. "The righteousness which is of faith," says St. Paul, (that righteousness which is wisdom unto salvation,) "speaketh on this wise; say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring Christ up again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Thus Scripture speaks: and what can be the effect of Scripture speaking thus, but to leave without excuse all those who will not be saved, all those who, while they could neither deny to others nor dismiss from themselves that their days on earth were as a handbreadth, and their life itself a flower that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away, yet hazarded, with their eyes fully open upon the tremendous risk, a loss that is irreparable, and would not "so number their days as to apply their hearts unto wisdom," though they knew it to be the wisdom that is from God, the wisdom that is unto salvation?

We would hope better things of you, brethren; God in his mercy grant that we may not hope in vain. There are too many in the world around you, and it may be feared there are some within these very walls—for those are not always the nearest to God who are most frequent in His church—there are some who have not "numbered their days," and who will not "apply their hearts." There are some who account us their enemies because we tell them the truth; some whose estimate of the excellency of a minister of Christ's Gospel seems to consist in this, that he shall neither feel himself, nor make his hearers feel. May God preserve those who minister in this place from ever recognizing such a standard, and you who hear from ever adopting or desiring it. Rather let us believe, as in charity we would feign do, that in repairing hither you are anxious that your hearts should "come unto wisdom," concerned that the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit should come down into your hearts as the gentle rain from heaven, and that beams from Christ, the Sun of righteousness, should penetrate and pervade the soil of the heart, and quicken the seed of grace, and cause it to spring up into the peaceable fruit of righteousness, that so ye may be born, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even the word of God which abideth for ever. Oh! may God grant it; for it is at least possible, it is more than possible in a congregation such as this, that there may be one, that there may be more than one, present, who at this very moment overhangs the grave but by a thread, who is parted but by a single step from all that is momentous in death and in the judgment seat of God; some one whose leaf has already begun to wither upon the tree of life, and who will be met to-night on his threshold by the fearful summons of the king of terrors: "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live."

Oh! then, let me entreat you now, by the mercy of God, by the precious blood of Christ, by the love of the Spirit, by your care for your own souls, by the example of the living around you who glorify Christ by holiness, and by the memory of the faithful who have departed hence in the Lord, defer not the numbering of your days till "a more convenient season," when, for aught you can tell, they may be already numbered in the purpose of God. Who, indeed, among you shall be the first to depart, whether it shall be the man full of days, the youth about to

enter into active life, or the virgin just blooming into womanhood, I know not; nor would I, for worlds, be endued with the power of going into this congregation and setting a fatal mark on the brow of every one here present, who shall be gathered to the innumerable dead before the season of the "sear and yellow leaf" shall have reached its wintry close. I would not, for all the universe could confer, possess that fearful power which belongs to God alone, and which He manifested when He caused the bodiless hand to start forth and proclaim upon the wall the sentence of the profane, though royal reveller, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting." Far better is it to proclaim to all of you, whatever you have been in time past, yea, whatever you now are, "wisdom crieth aloud," that she inviteth the sinful and simple among the sons of men, that the Lord Jesus cries unto whomsoever will to come unto the Father, and adds the gracious assurance, that "whosoever cometh shall in nowise be cast out." It is not for us to know who will or who will not be saved; but one thing we do know, that Christ Jesus is the "propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world;" and consequently, if God hath not excluded any, why should any by perverse and presumptuous indifference exclude themselves? Only "apply your hearts," we say to men, only "cause them to come unto wisdom," only make the best use in your power of the means which God has ordained, and then, what can you have to apprehend, when you are expressly assured that "whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life?" Will He refuse what you sincerely ask? Will He withhold what you heartily seek? Assuredly not, if only "He is faithful who hath promised," and if whatever He hath promised He is "able also to perform." But can there be any doubt of either of these? How should there be?—how should there be, I ask, while the stars keep their courses, while the ocean knows its boundaries, while the moon sheds its pale splendour, and the sun beams forth in bright meridian ray, while nature herself bears witness to the unchangeableness of God? "For ever, O Lord," says David, "thy word is settled in heaven;" and in the same spirit, and to the same purport was it declared by David's greater Son, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away."

Thus, then, it will be manifest that you who are now present will be left without excuse if you put away from yourselves the solemn admonition which you have heard to-day, that you "number your days," and neglect the consequent exhortation that you "apply your hearts unto wisdom." But we trust which you will not incur the combined folly and peril of framing such an excuse. You are not called upon to sacrifice aught that is really worth retaining for its intrinsic value, or to undertake aught that could even palliate, much less justify, the adoption of such a course. "Do thyself no harm," is the language of the law; and what is the sentence of the gospel? It is this—that godliness, which is practical wisdom, is profitable for both worlds, "having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Will any, think you, love man the less because they fear God the more? Will any withhold what is due from the members of Christ's body because they render what is primarily due to Christ the head? Will any become "slothful in business" because they are "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord?" My brethren, if we had respect only to its benignant influences upon the present life, we might still say, without fear of contradiction, "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding." He who regards man because he fears God, will ordinarily receive from man what he renders, and benefits communicated will lead to benefits conferred. But how much more when the excellency of this knowledge is that wisdom which giveth life to them that have it; how much more when that very same wisdom, which is the best preparation for life, is also the sole preparation for death; when the only path to life and immortality is the "coming unto wisdom;" the coming unto God through Christ, in whom He is ever well pleased, and well pleased even with the chief of sinners when transformed into a sincere penitent for Christ's sake!

Oh! then, see to it, that, admonished as you have been by the voice of God Himself in the sudden death of a fellow immortal, see to it, that ye so "number your days" as to "apply your hearts unto wisdom." And may none of you, when his hour shall come, depart hence with the exceeding great and bitter cry, "I applied not my heart unto wisdom because I would not number my days, and now fear is come upon me as desolation, and destruction as a whirlwind; the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved." My brethren, "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." But whether your destiny be life, or whether it be death, depart at least having learned this one lesson, that no man can be happy to-morrow but the man who is wise to-day.

## A Funeral Sermon,

BY THE

REV. JOSEPH E. BEAUMONT, M.D.

PREACHED IN GREAT QUEEN STREET CHAPEL, LINCOLN'S-INN-FIELDS,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 7, 1847.

On the Death of Mr. W. Clemence, who had for many years been an office-bearer in connection with that Society.

*"I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."*—Psalm xxiii. 6.

THERE is a very great similarity between the experience of ancient saints, and that of modern ones; in fact, the former were types of the latter. In the Psalms of David there are found a class of compositions called the joyous psalms; in which you look into the hearts of the saints, as into a garden, and see there all manner of beautiful flowers, and every variety of delicious fruits. Then there are psalms called the plaintive psalms; in which you look into the hearts of the saints, and see them depressed, and agitated, and anxious, and bowed down, and sorrowful. And then there are psalms that may be called Divine statutory psalms—containing injunctions and instructions for the behaviour of the saints. We find in the psalms not only what one or two saints have done—not only how one or two saints have lived and died—but how all saints have lived and died.

The psalm from which I have taken the text, is redolent of this instruction. It contains a description of the life of the saint, and of the death of the saint. It is one of the most beautiful in the whole collection. It may be very early committed to memory; and when once committed, it is hardly ever effaced. Its simple and natural imagery commend it to the young; it has a purchase upon the youthful mind, because of its extraordinary beauty and simplicity. The young, therefore, easily catch at it, and it is laid up in their minds; and it awakens, in after years, with the power of melody, charming them along the course of life, and with the beauties of spring, bursting from the rigours of winter. It is a guide to the young, entering on the pilgrimage of life; to the man bearing "the burden and heat of the day," it is both a "rod" and a "staff;" to the aged pilgrim, going down the slopes of life, it supplies material for confidence; and to many that have crossed "the valley of the shadow of death," it has supplied the language of triumph and of victory.

The psalm consists of two parts—it takes up two familiar images: the one, drawn from the shepherd-life—the other from the monarch-life. Both entered into the experience of David. The first image refers to that part of his life, in which he fulfilled the quiet and obscure duties of a shepherd, to which he often alluded, as the most interesting and impressive, although not the most splendid. It was while he was a shepherd, that he caught up those images of beauty, which formed the warp and the woof of his inimitable compositions. In reference to this part of his life, he says—"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." He then drops this image, and takes up another—describing a royal person providing for his guests. He says:—"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

He says—"The Lord is my shepherd." This is a relation in which Jehovah stands to all His people; and David, alluding to the providential and superintending care of God over him, declares this relationship, and draws a very large inference from it. The relationship is in itself vast, and admits of large conclusions. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." He then says—"I shall not want provision?" "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." "I shall not want quiet and repose?" "He leadeth me beside the still waters." The gentle stream, gliding along among "the green pastures," does not startle the sheep: "He leadeth me beside the still waters." "I shall not want revival and restoration:" "He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the

paths of righteousness, for His name's sake." "And in the hour of death," "yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." He has not got rid of the shepherd-life yet. He seems to represent himself as a sheep, going through some dark and gloomy defile—a cleft—a fissure—an awful ravine, overhung with frightful precipices,—“the shadow of death” being in it; as if death imprinted his own shadow on the valley—so that turn where the poor sheep might, it would encounter the image of death. I am not sure whether this was the figure—I am not sure whether the psalmist did not mean to represent death as some great bird, hovering over the valley and darkening it. But “though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil;” “no evil”—none to my body, none to my soul, none to my destiny. Death cannot damage the soul—death cannot mould the destiny: all that death is allowed to do, is to sever that mysterious ligament which binds the soul and body together. “Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.” What are this “rod and staff;” but the Almighty power and covenant faithfulness of our Shepherd, God, who says—“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”—“no, never?” Here the Psalmist parts with this beautiful image. But he lingers upon it; he dwells on it much more than he does upon the next one, although that is more splendid.

He now represents Jehovah as an affluent entertainer of himself—providing him with all fulness and all delicacy and all honour. “Thou preparest a table before me; Thou anointest my head with oil.” It was the custom, in eastern countries, for the entertainer to put oil on the head, not of all the guests, but only of the chief guest; and this not common oil, but rare oil. “Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.” His confidence then rises. “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” And what then? “I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

This “house of the Lord,” observe, is on the other side of “the valley of the shadow of death;” and therefore it is just a description of heaven; and if the character of a shepherd sets forth the conduct of God towards His people, while in this world, the character of a monarch sets forth His character towards them in the world to come.

All that I propose to do, is to notice—first, the scene here adverted to—“the house of the Lord;” and secondly, the assurance expressed by the psalmist respecting it: “I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

I. First, the scene referred to: “the house of the Lord.”

As this house is placed beyond “the valley of the shadow of death,” it must (as I have said) be a description of heaven; which may be designated “the house of the Lord,”—first, because it is the scene of His familiar glory; secondly, because it is the temple of His worship; thirdly, as it is the palace of His kingdom; and fourthly, as it is the abode of His family.

1. It may be said to be “the house of the Lord,” because it is the scene of His glory—of His own familiar residence.

There are three heavens: the aerial, or atmospheric heaven, in which the birds fly; the ethereal heaven, in which the bodies of the solar system have their movements; and “the third heaven;” where God dwells in all His glory. What a house that must be! “The earth is His footstool”—“heaven is His throne.” I do not know what the throne is, except as I get a notion of it by looking at the footstool. What a footstool is to a throne, earth is to heaven. And what a splendid footstool it is! Look at the firmament above us. There is the glorious sunrise—the living sunshine—the beautiful sunset; there is the chaste moon, shedding her silvery beams upon this our world; there are the stars—those beauteous points of light, acting upon the physical substance we call the globe. And as to the earth itself, there are the flowers, with all their lovely graceful forms, and all their sweet and redolent scents and odours; there are the delicious fruits, which are the consummation of those flowers, affording food for man and beast; there is the river, reflecting the surrounding landscape, and rolling on in a course of abundant fertility; there is the great wide sea, the mirror of the firmament, the image of immortality. But this is only the footstool; and if this be but the footstool, what must be the throne!

2. Secondly, heaven is “the house of the Lord,” because it is the temple of His worship.

John said, in describing the New Testament state of the church, in its millennial grace and glory—“I saw no temple therein.” What! no temple? In the millennial glory, the whole earth will be one temple. “I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God,” says he, “and the Lamb, are the temple of it.” And if that be a description of worship in its purest state on earth, it is just a description of worship in heaven. The Lord God is the object of worship there, the Lamb is the medium of worship there; and the worship of the Lord

God, through the Lamb, is the essence of the worship of saved sinners, whether in earth or in heaven.

No doubt the psalmist, in this language, adverted to the tabernacle, in which he had often worshipped himself; and especially to the temple, for the building of which he had made such costly preparation, and the actual rearing of which was handed over to his son Solomon. And if there be some things found in that "house of the Lord," which are not found in the heavenly house, it is only because those things were superseded by the heavenly. Instead of the Shechinah, contained in "the house of the Lord" referred to by David, there is the throne of God himself, shining with overpowering beauty, in a manner of which, I confess, I have no conception. Instead of a Jewish priesthood, and its ministrations, there is Jesus Christ, "the great High Priest of our profession," evermore presenting the oblation of Himself. Instead of the table of shew-bread, there are the sources of infinite satisfaction; "in God's presence there is fulness of joy, and at His right hand are pleasures," represented by the table of shew-bread—implying satisfaction. Instead of the ark of the covenant—that mysterious little chest, with the cherubim brooding over it in angel form—there is the presence of God himself. Instead of the palm trees, intermingled with angelic and cherubic forms, which formed the proper adornments of that house, in heaven itself there are men blended with angels—holy men and holy angels, joining their worship together; just as the palm and cherubim, in former times, were twisted together on the walls of the temple of Jerusalem. There eye worship is performed; there the worshippers see the face of God, with no night to interrupt their devotions.

8. Heaven may be said to be "the house of the Lord," because it is the palace of His kingdom.

Jehovah stood to the Jewish nation in the relation of their king; and near the temple at Jerusalem was the palace, in which the king dwelt. And if we are to consider God as ruling by David, as a deputy king, then the palace of the deputy king was the house which David built, upon the crest of Mount Zion. The loftiest part of that ridge of mountains called Zion, was inaccessible. Joshua was a mighty captain,—but he could not take it; and until the time of David it could not be taken. But David, as the type of the Messiah, took Mount Zion; and to show the perfection of his triumph, he built two houses on it—a temple for God, and a palace for himself. And when he built them—the one for the King, and the other for the deputy king—he showed the triumph of truth; and that was a pledge of the universal prevalence of the true religion.

My brethren, where goes the Christian when he dies? Is he sent down to the house of God's enemies; that is to say, is he sent down to purgatory? Is he sent to wander, like a ghost, to some distant parts of the universe? Is he kept hovering around the scene of his former residence, according to the notions of our forefathers? No. Where does he go then? Into "the house of the Lord"—the palace of the king. There he enters; and there he is entertained.

4. Once more: heaven is "the house of the Lord," because it is the abode of His family.

This is not of less importance than the other particulars I have named; it is different—not less; it is changed—not reduced. I have spoken of the palace of the king—I speak now of the abode of the king's family. You will recollect that the palace of the king, is the abode of the king's children. The manner of a king, when he shows himself to guests who make a transient visit to the palace, and flit through the royal gallery, is very different from what it is to his own children, who live in the palace. There are the loves of home, the fellowships of home, the intimacies of home. A visitor to a palace feels himself stiff and stately, while appearing before royalty; but the children of the king go to and fro at their ease.

II. Let me force myself away, and take you with me, from this part of our subject; and let me now, in the second place, invite your attention to the assurance expressed by the psalmist, and participated in by all believers, with respect to that house. He says, "I will dwell in it;" "I will dwell in it for ever."

1. This language implies the assurance, on his part, of the existence of a state of future blessedness.

Reason says there must be such a state; conscience says there is such a state. Hence men often lull their conscience; they drug it—they damage it—they break the edge of it; but there it is—they cannot destroy it; and ever and anon conscience speaks like thunder. Like some chemical characters; in certain temperatures they are illegible; but raise the

temperature, and they appear in all their reality. But let me not dwell on what either reason or conscience teaches of a future state; let me come at once to the revelation of the Bible. "Life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel." Jesus taught immortality: no one taught it as He did; no one preached it as He preached it. He startled His congregation with the manner in which He preached it. He said—"I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." He taught it by facts of His own history; He taught it by His ascension, when, having expounded unto the people all the words of this life, "He led them out as far as up to Bethany," and pronouncing His benediction on them, He began to ascend into the air. He was not carried from them in a whirlwind, or in a chariot of fire; but breaking the laws of gravitation, which bind physical bodies to their planet, He ascended gradually, till He was lost to the disciples in the splendour of the mid-heaven. And they said—"Whither is He gone? Will He come again? He will; He said He would." And they "went to Jerusalem with great joy." Those very men, who when they heard He was going away were very sorrowful, when they had seen Him go away were "filled with great joy." They had seen Him go up into heaven; and when He went, He made an opening wide enough for all His people to follow.

2. But let me not dwell upon this; but observe, secondly, the extent of the psalmist's assurance. He says—"I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

He only sojourned in it here. Man is never satisfied here. If he were nothing but an animal, he might be; there is quite enough here for the satisfaction of the animal; and the mere animal lives here in contentment, and takes its fill of happiness for its little inch of time; and the birds that fly in the air, warble in the atmosphere, and are as satisfied as they can be. But not so man: man is not a mere animal—man is a rational being. If he were a mere intellectual being, and nothing more, then he might dwell here. There is a mystery in a grain of sand, which might occupy him a hundred years to find out; there is a mystery in a drop of water, which might occupy him a hundred more; and when he had travelled through every variety of visible objects, he might bring the microscope into exercise: and then he might take the telescope, and occupy himself in finding out the laws of the heavenly bodies—their revolutions, their inversions and reversions. There is food enough for his intellect. But man is not a mere intellectual being; he is a moral being, a spiritual being; and therefore he cannot dwell here. But "in the house of the Lord," says David, "I will dwell for ever." "I shall have enough there." "I shall be satisfied," says he, "when I awake up in Thy likeness."

Is there anything so uncertain and unsatisfying as the things you find here? What are you thinking about? Is it pleasure, or is it power?—for everything may be resolved under these two designations. Is there anything so airy and evanescent as pleasure? Look at the beautiful colouring matter, that lies on the wing of the insect. The sunbeam plays on the wing. When the night comes, not a tint remains. There is pleasure! Or is it power you are thinking about? Are you looking up to some of those states of existence which seem the most secure—principalities, dominions, and thrones? I find "vanity" written on the gate of the palace—on the coronet of the prince—on the crown of the sovereign; yea, I find it written as largely and as legibly on the gate of the palace and the crown of the monarch, as on the door of the cottage and the rag of the pauper. "I will not dwell here," the Psalmist says; "I will dwell in the house of the Lord."

3. Thirdly, look at the permanence which he attaches to his residence in that house. He says—"I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

What is "for ever?" Look at the lives which some men live; look at the life of our venerable friend, to whose history we shall in a few minutes have to direct your attention—three score years and ten, and more. That seems a long while; but it is all gone, like a shadow, like a dream, like "a tale that is told." That is not "for ever." Look at those long lives which the patriarchs lived: some of them lived nearly a thousand years. That is but a finger-breadth of existence. Look at the Egyptian pyramids, towering in the clouds: are they "for ever?" No—they have but a hand-breath of duration. Look at the classic remains which have come down to us from master-minds—the poetry that is as yet uncorroded by time,—is that "for ever?" Look at the Bible: is that "for ever?" Moses wrote the first book of it. Look at the crust of our globe—the remains of animal and vegetable life which have been preserved: are they "for ever?" No. Then what is "for ever?"

Brethren, if I do not attempt to tell you what "for ever" is, do not turn round and accuse me of impropriety, and ask me not to contemplate that which

I cannot describe to you. Shall I refuse to stand on the shore of the ocean, and dart my eye over the surface as far as I can, because I cannot see to the other side? So far from this interrupting me from gazing on the one side, it excites my gaze all the more. I have got something so vast, that I cannot measure it. So here. This "house of the Lord" is to be dwelt in "for ever;" its pavement shall never break up—its walls never crumble—its inhabitants never die.

4. And lastly: observe, the Psalmist has the greatest degree of confidence, as to his occupying this house "for ever." *"I will dwell in it for ever."*

And here I must make one remark. The confidence of the ancient saints, as to their immortality, seems to have been quite equal to the confidence of any saints in later times. Though there was less revealed to them of heaven than there is revealed to us, yet their confidence in this respect was no less than ours. I cannot imagine a stronger utterance than that language in the text: *"I will dwell in it for ever."* And this confidence rests on three great pillars: the promise of God, the finished work of the Redeemer, and the sealing of the Holy Ghost.

(1.) The promise of God. "He cannot lie." He hath promised His people an exceeding great reward. At the time in which He interrupted Abraham in taking the usual spoils of war, God said unto him—"Fear not, Abraham; I am thy exceeding great reward." "God hath prepared for His people a city;" and hence it is said—"He is not ashamed to be called their God." But if His people have nothing better than what is described in the epistle to the Hebrews, it might have seemed to us that He would be ashamed to be called their God. "They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, and were destitute, afflicted, and tormented;" they seemed the offscouring of the world; they had no certain dwelling place upon earth—they lived in fissures of the rock. But God was not ashamed to be called their God; because He had "prepared for them a city." He had something in store for them, which He had promised to give them. And "faithful is He that hath promised, who is able also to perform." "He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent."

(2.) Again: this assurance rests on the finished work of the Redeemer—the finished atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. Redemption, forgiveness, adoption, justification, regeneration, are all blessings which come to us through the atonement of Christ; and heaven comes to us in the same way. Heaven is a purchased inheritance; and if heaven do not follow earth in the experience of the believer, there must be some correspondence wanting. Surely, all men of Christ must discern heaven; ~~that~~ the natural sequel of the sufferings of Christ—it is the necessary consequence of the work of Jesus.

(3.) Lastly, the seal of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God bears witness with the people of God, attesting that they are His children—"and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." All the fruits of the Spirit are the seal of the Holy Ghost. Wherever the fruits of the Spirit appear, there you see the work of the Spirit. And will the Holy Ghost suffer His work to perish? No, He will take care of it; and in fact, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the child of God, is a proof of the resurrection of the body. Will the Holy Ghost allow His temple to lie in ruins for ever? No, He will come down again, and claim it.

Having noticed the assurance expressed by the psalmist, with respect to "the house of the Lord," let us close by learning, in the first place, that we must not mourn for the removal of our Christian friends. For although we have lost them, they are not lost; and though we sorrow on account of their departure, yet we "sorrow not as those that have no hope;" for "them that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with Him."

And I would observe, further, that the prospect of "dwelling in the house of the Lord for ever," should reconcile us in the midst of our affliction and suffering, as well as in the prospect of death itself. We ought to "reckon," with the apostle Paul, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." You say the world is to you a garden. It is to some persons a garden, cultivated by the hand of industry and skill. It yields some beautiful flowers, and some rich fruits. But if you would have the world called a garden, you must know what kind of garden it is. There is only one to which I can compare it—that in the Gospel: "There was a garden; and in the garden was a sepulchre." All those flowers, however beautiful, must wither and fade—all those fruits, however delicious, must be destroyed; for in that garden there is a sepulchre. But to the Christian there is a flower that never fades, even the flower of immortality. Christ says—"Because I live, ye shall live also."

And let me say, my friends, that we ought to be stirred up on this occasion to the making preparation to go to "this house of the Lord." Men may say, they hope to go there; but are they making any preparation for it? There may exist the feeling of hope, where there is no ground for hope; and if an unjustified or an un sanctified man is hoping for heaven, he may have the feeling of hope, but he has no ground for his hope. I wish to-night to bring before you the case of a man who had a hope of heaven, and who had a preparation for heaven.

Must I say to this assembly, (perhaps I ought not to think of parting from it without saying,) in what this preparation consists? Two words describe it all—justification and sanctification. Without justification no man can enter that house. The king will not allow a rebel to go into his palace. Without sanctification no man can enter it. The king will not allow a leper, if the most honourable man in the country, to enter into his palace. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." A man in a violent passion may strike a fellow-creature and commit a breach of the law; he may then be thrown into prison, and remain there till he has satisfied the demands of the law. He is then justified; he has paid the penalty, the law has no more hold on him, the prison-doors are opened, and he comes out. But he may bring out all the bad passions he took in with him, and be not a bit more fit for society than he was before he went into it. The man is justified; but he wants sanctifying. "Be ye holy," saith the Lord. If you could imagine a man going down to hell, and putting out its fire, would that make the people in it happy? No; there is a fire within them, that must be put out.

Consider what I am saying. And let me now give you the case of a man justified and sanctified. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright."

Our deceased friend Mr. Wm. Clemence, was born at Camelford, in the county of Cornwall, about the year 1773; his mother was a member of the Society of Friends, and exceedingly strict with her children, training them up in the rigid principles of the sect of which she was a member. His grandfather was a member of the Wesleyan Society, and one that joined the people when they were few, despised and persecuted; his first class ticket is still preserved as a family relic of peculiar interest, and one that he received from the hands of the venerable founder of Methodism himself.

At the age of ten years he had the great honour of being noticed by the venerable Wesley. In one of his visits to Camelford he slept at the house of his grandfather; when anxious to do something for the man of God, he ran and fetched his shoes; and the simple event was not unnoticed by the holy man, who, like his Divine Master, was fond of children; the truly apostolic man laid his hands on the head of the youth, and with uplifted hands to heaven, exclaimed—"God bless the lad." This short prayer, uttered by this distinguished servant of Christ, made a lasting impression on his youthful mind; he never forgot it, and in after life, when alluding to that event in his family, or in the lovefeast, (as many present to-night have heard him say,) He believed God heard and answered that prayer, and would exultingly exclaim—"God has blessed the lad, and the lad's lads," for they have all given their hearts to God, and are members of the Methodist society.

It was between the age of fourteen and fifteen that he became very seriously concerned for the salvation of his soul; at that time he was apprenticed to a "holy good man," as he used to call his master, Mr. G. Michael, of St. Austell, who was a most zealous local preacher, and who was anxious that those placed under his charge, should be partakers of like precious faith with himself, and earnestly exhorted his youthful charge to give his heart to the Lord. During his apprenticeship, there was a general spirit of hearing amongst the people; thousands flocked to hear the Gospel; the heavenly flame broke out in the most extraordinary manner, and great numbers were then gathered into the fold of Christ.

Amidst this general revival of the work of God, our friend was deeply affected under a sermon, preached by the Rev. W. Thoresby, and such was the depth of his religious conviction, that he could get no rest day or night, to body or soul; and after the family had retired to rest—there was none for him—he would stealthily leave the house in the darkness and gloom of the night, retire under a hedge or tree in the fields, and there roar out for the disquietude of his soul. This continued for some time, till it pleased God to set his soul at perfect liberty; and "he went on his way, rejoicing" in God his Saviour. "All things became new;" even the trees and fields, where he had "wrestled with God," wore a brighter aspect, and he was ready to call out—

"Break forth into singing, ye trees of the wood,  
For Jesus is bringing lost sinners to God."



In alluding to the circumstances of his conversion, he used to say, "I can tell the time when, and I could point out the place where God set my soul at glorious liberty."

He was immediately taken by the hand, and united himself to the Methodist Society. No sooner had he tasted and felt that the Lord was gracious, than he felt a yearning desire, in some humble way, to do good to the souls of others and to point them to the Lamb of God; and like Paul, he cried out—"Lord, what wouldest Thou have me to do?" He joined a small band of zealous men, and with them went miles to hold prayer meetings, and some one of them would give a short exhortation, and great good would result from their self denying labours of love.

He continued doing good after this manner till about the age of twenty, when he became a local preacher, and his labours were greatly blessed of God, and great numbers flocked to hear him. As he was constitutionally of a warm and ardent temperament, so this entered into all that he said or did, and the zealous, heart-felt discourses were listened to with deep interest. He was a man of strong natural good sense, great originality in his remarks, and very pointed in his addresses.

He soon attracted the attention of the itinerant preachers, amongst whom was the late Rev. Francis Truscott, who earnestly wished him to offer himself as a travelling preacher, but to this he would not consent. In after life, and after mature consideration he deeply regretted this, believing he had gone out of the way of Divine providence, and grieved the Spirit of God. As soon as he was out of his apprenticeship he left Cornwall, for the Metropolis, and immediately joined himself to the Society in London, and was a member at Grosvenor Market, where their only preaching place was over a slaughter house, and many a time have the little band of devoted persons been subjected to the most disgusting annoyances in their ingress and egress at this their place of worship; it was a day of feeble things, but from this small beginning sprung the Hinde Street chapel and society.

A singular, but interesting circumstance occurred at one of their prayer-meetings, at which he was present, in this place. The good brethren were unusually warm and zealous in their prayer, and such was the influence of the Spirit of God in their meeting, that they could not break up till a very late hour, as souls were crying for mercy; the singing and prayer at such an unusual hour attracted the attention of the watchman, and the venerable guardian of the night went in to insist on their breaking up the meeting, or he would take them to the watchhouse; unmindful of his requests and threats, they still continued praying, and presently down fell the watchman on his knees, crying out as loud and as earnestly for salvation, as any of the souls in distress; and the power of the Lord was present to heal, and there he found peace with God.

He used occasionally to worship at the old West street chapel, and listen to the venerable Benson, then in his prime, and the now venerable Richard Beece, and other worthies of that day.

After continuing in London for some years he again, on account of the failure of his health, returned to his native county, and in the year 1802, entered into the marriage state, selecting, as his future partner in life, a pious young woman, a member of the Methodist Society, soundly converted to God, and who has been from that time to the day of his death, a faithful and an affectionate wife, and truly "a help meet" for him. She survives to mourn the choice of her youth, after a happy union for the long space of forty-five years. Again, in the year 1818, he with his family, came to reside in London, (and took up his permanent abode here during the remainder of his life,) and at once united himself to the Methodist Society connected with this chapel. In this he was very particular, wherever God cast his providential lot, there immediately to join himself to the people, and many a time has he impressed this upon the minds of young people, wherever they may move, to lose no time in joining the Society; believing, the failing to do this, to be one fruitful source of backsliding.

It was not long after he came to London this last time, whilst engaged in his business as a builder, he met with an accident, which had well nigh deprived the family of its head, and the church of God of a most valuable member. By a fall he broke his leg, and such was the dangerous nature of the fracture, that his workmen immediately, without the knowledge of the family, carried him to Middlesex Hospital, where a consultation of surgeons took place, who decided, that owing to the dangerous nature of the fracture, to save his life, amputation must be resorted to. He was informed of this, and the answer was characteristic of the man, for he at once, with his usual prompt decision, said—"It shall not be done—we came into the world together and we will go out

together—my trust is in God, I am in His hands; He that made the leg can heal it." He remained in the Hospital eleven weeks enduring much pain, and suffering dreadfully from the effects of the broken limb, but enjoying the blessedness of the man whose trust is in God.

While laid by from more active duties, he still was about his Master's work. For the salvation of the souls of the attendants and the patients in his ward, he was most anxious, and, as he could not be removed to his home, he made the best of the opportunity he had to do good. One poor man in a bed near him, who was in a dying state, he earnestly exhorted to seek the Lord, and he soon heard the poor dying man saying—"Lord, save me! God be merciful to me a sinner!" And he pointed him to the Saviour of sinners, and sent messages of salvation by the nurse, telling her what to say to the poor despairing sinner; soon after this he died, but he had hope that in the eleventh hour, the Saviour that had compassion on the dying thief on the cross saved him. It pleased God to bless the means made use of, so that he was enabled to leave the Hospital, but for a long time was obliged to walk on crutches.

When he was sufficiently recovered, his active and zealous mind would not permit him to remain idle. Though comparatively a cripple, he attended and took part in the various prayer meetings; and opened his own house on a Sunday evening for prayer, that his neighbours might come in and hear prayer; and on these occasions, when the place was crowded to excess, he would, in his peculiar impressive way, address a few words to those present. His words were words of fire; they came from the heart and went to the hearts of his hearers, and very many there were who got good to their souls; many of our young and most promising Sunday-school teachers and local preachers, attended this meeting, and many of those young men have since gone out into the work of the ministry, some as missionaries in foreign lands, and have often thought and wrote about the Sunday night prayer meetings at "Father Clemence's." They were, indeed, choice means of grace; he presided over them himself; those, who in the prime of his usefulness, have heard him in his fervent prayer and passionate ejaculations, felt that he was a man of faith and mighty in prayer. To those who engaged in prayer, he would say—"Pray short and to the point! Ask God to save sinners, and to sanctify the souls of believers." To the penitent seekers of salvation he was peculiarly useful, and great was the good effected in those hallowed means of grace, through his instrumentality, and many had to say, 'I was born of God in father Clemence's house, in Villiers street.'

He was appointed to the office of class leader in the year 1824, an office which he was most peculiarly adapted to fill. He had improved his mind by reading much; he was intimately acquainted with the Word of God, and well instructed in the doctrine and discipline of the Methodists; a deep and original thinker; added to which, he had a most retentive memory, and was a thorough Methodist, both in discipline and doctrine, believing that it was the best form of Christianity that had been given to the world; and under this impression he laboured hard to infuse the same healthy principles into the minds of others that had full possession of his own. His thorough knowledge of our hymns was surprising; he would quote whole hymns with astonishing accuracy, and when appealed to by any one to know where such a hymn or verse of a hymn was, he would almost immediately direct the inquirer to the page and hymn. In like manner it was with the Word of God. He was in fact what a leader should be—faithful, lively, active, judicious; a man eminently acquainted with human nature.

Having these peculiar qualifications, it is not to be wondered at that he soon became the leader of two very numerous classes; one on the Sunday morning at seven, the other on Thursday evening, at seven; those who had the privilege of meeting with him, (and those only,) will be able to know and feel the loss that the church of Christ has sustained in this department of our peculiar economy. One of our highly respected preachers bore testimony to his talents as a leader; he says—"I stood on the landing of the class room, and it has been no small treat to hear him lead his class; to hear him meet with so much aptness, the various cases of his members, with well chosen passages of Scripture; in fact, he seemed cut out and moulded for this particular department of our work."

About the year 1825 he became a visitor and lecturer in Old George Yard Sunday school, belonging to this chapel. The duties of a lecturer were to take a class of the elder boys, or girls, separately and alternately, into a room by themselves, with their teacher, and there speak to them individually (more pointedly than could be done in a crowded school-room,) about their eternal interests, and read and explain the Word of God more fully, as adapted to their peculiar cases, and pray with and for them; and many, who now are

members, and some who are office-bearers, will never forget the pointed and affectionate appeals he made to them, to give their hearts to God in the day of their youth.

As a visitor and patron of Sunday schools, he was made very useful ; his warm and telling addresses, his pointed anecdotes, great originality and variety of subjects, riveted the attention and found the way to the hearts and memories of all who heard. And "father Clemence" was always hailed by both children and teachers as a most welcome "visitor." His were words of encouragement, and when compelled to administer to the children or teachers, at their meetings, rebuke, it was found and felt that "faithful are the wounds of a friend." To the Sunday-school his loss will be severely felt.

It has been said, that he was a thorough Methodist and loved it much, and as such, it is not to be wondered at, that having so strongly recommended it to others, he did not forget to recommend it to those who were most dear to him—his children. He was anxious that his family should belong to the same church and people ; for this he earnestly prayed ; this he used every means to accomplish ; not to make them merely members, but he could not rest short of their conversion to God. He early introduced them to our Sunday-school, and was not ashamed to see them take the scholar's form, where they might hear of Jesus ; and they gradually rose from this, to take the teacher's chair, and endeavour to instruct others in the truths they heard ; and by this and other means, they began to enquire after their father's Saviour, and earnestly desired Him, as their Saviour. And the result of this, many have heard him state in our lovefeasts ; he would stand up with deep emotion, and with tears streaming down his aged cheeks, and say, that he believed he was the happiest parent living, for all his seven children and two grandchildren had given their hearts to God, and joined themselves to their father's and grandfather's church and people ; and now two of his dear children, after many years of a consistent and holy life, have died rejoicing in Christ their Saviour, leaving their godly example to their families, who still feel that the memory of the just is blessed, and although their families mourn them as dead to them, yet they rejoice in the glorious soul-cheering certainty, that parent and children have hailed each other on the eternal shore. Oh ! the thought lifts the fainting spirits up. Father ! daughters ! washed in the same all cleansing blood, casting their crowns before the Saviour, lost in wonder, love and praise, where there shall be no more death, and the inhabitants shall not say they are sick.

We have, hitherto, spoken of him as the *active* Christian ; it will now be our duty briefly to speak of him in his retirement from the more active duties of the church. In the year 1835 he was with great difficulty persuaded, (and with much reluctance on his part yielded to the entreaties of his family, who saw with sorrow his health was giving way,) to give up his Sunday morning class—a choice class, to which he was most strongly attached. He summoned up all his energies still to meet the Thursday night class—for this duty was his delight)—and many have witnessed this aged servant of Christ tottering along towards Queen Street Chapel on a Thursday night—winter and summer—no weather kept him away—always punctual, and usually ten minutes or a quarter of an hour before the time, that he might compose his mind and recruit his strength to enter upon his beloved work. He continued to meet this class till the last four years of his life, when his health visibly gave way, and it became painfully apparent to his family and friends that the "strong man was bowing himself, and the silver cord was loosening." The effects of age, and repeated attacks of paralysis, began to make him very feeble. The half-century of his connection with Methodism, as well as the seventieth year of his age had passed away ; but his mind was cheerful, and there seemed at times a deeper solemnity in his words, as he exhorted his family to stand by Methodism, that old ship that he had sailed in so long and so happily—believing it to be destined, under God, to be instrumental in the salvation of thousands of immortal souls. From this time the sudden and successive shocks of sickness kept his family in constant alarm respecting him—feeling assured that the time of his departure was at hand. And he himself was aware of this, and, like a faithful servant, he was found waiting for the summons of his Lord. It was exceedingly painful to his family, to see not only the body enfeebled, but his noble and vigorous mind giving way. To many subjects connected with the world he was totally at a loss to bring his mind ; but talk to him on the subject of religion, and he was at home in a moment, and has astonished the family with his collectedness—giving the most circumstantial account of his early companions in the church of Christ, and the events connected with Methodism for more than half a century gone by.

It was after partially recovering from one of his most severe attacks of paralysis, that he was invited by his eldest son to spend a few weeks with him and his family at Shepherd Bush Green, hoping that this change would benefit him. In some degree it had this effect, and he was enabled to walk out into the garden—and would say, there was much that was lovely left us by the ever-blessed God in this lower world. On the Sunday, only eight days before his death, he appeared much better than usual, and sat down with the family and enjoyed a very hearty dinner. At the table, one of the family, struck with the heavenly smile on his countenance, said, "Father, how happy you look! I never saw you look so happy." And this was apparent, and noticed by all present. He rose from his seat, and said, "I am happy; I never was so happy in my life;" and then, with uplifted hands and sparkling eyes, he repeated, with considerable emphasis, the lines of his favourite hymn—

"For my life, and clothes, and food,  
And every comfort here,  
Thee, my most indulgent God,  
I thank with heart sincere."

And so he went on till he came to the last line; and then, with holy joy beaming in his countenance, he said—

"And for the smallest spark of grace,  
And for my hope of heaven."

It was on the evening of this day that he retired to rest apparently better than he had been for some time. When the family were alarmed by hearing him groan, they ran to his assistance, and found him in violent pain. Medical aid was immediately had, and everything done that skill and kindness could suggest; and it was again fondly hoped that he might yet rally once more; but in a day or two it was painfully apparent that his constitution had received such a shock that he would never recover this attack. And owing to the violence and nature of the disease, his mind at times painfully wandered; but at intervals, when a state of consciousness returned, he was very calm and collected, blessing God for all His mercies, and thanking and asking God's blessing on any one that administered to his comfort; saying, "What a blessing it is that I am dying in the bosom of my family, wanting for nothing, all vying with each other to make my last hours peaceful and happy!" And he would watch his affectionate wife round the room; and the tear of affection would start into his sunken eyes as he would exhort her to make the Lord her stay, and put her trust in Him, and He would support and take care of her. To his children and grandchildren he would recommend strongly that religion that was his stay and staff in the trying hour, and lift up his hands and eyes, and pray God to bless them. To one of his sons he said, "I have gone forth weeping, bearing precious seed, and am now rejoicing. I see the glorious fruit of my prayer to God for my dear children and grandchildren. I have six of them in heaven" (alluding to some who had died in their infancy), "and all my children are united to God's and their father's people. Oh! that we may all meet in heaven! I believe we shall; I believe God will not permit a hoof to be left behind." To his grand-daughter, who was kindly administering to his wants, and a Sunday School teacher, he said, "Oh! I shall meet many of the dear little Sunday School children in heaven—those that I have told about Jesus. Blessed Jesus! glorious hope! Oh! what a glorious meeting! Ah! we shall know more of heaven by five minutes experience of it than could be known by the wisest and holiest men, had they lived as long as Methuselah. Oh! it's 'a rest' for the people of God! I can't sing now, but I shall sing there." Looking up, he said inquiringly, "Do you want a theme for praise? I will give you one; it is this—'My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.' This will always furnish you with a subject for gratitude and praise." Again he said, "Why don't you praise the Lord? Why don't you shout? I am sure you would if you were as happy as I am. Why don't you sing? You must sing." It was asked him what should be sung. He said, "sing this"—

"I the good fight have fought,  
O when shall I declare  
The victory by my Saviour got,  
I long with Paul to share."

This blessed word be mine  
Just as the port is gain'd,  
'Kept by the power of grace Divine,  
I have the truth maintain'd."

And so he went on to the last two lines, and then he said—"They could not speak a greater word. No, they could not—it is impossible."

His speech became now very inarticulate; but listening very attentively to what he said, he could be heard praising the Lord, and said Jesus was all

in all to him—he was on the Rock—that his faith in Christ was unshaken ; and when, through exhaustion, he could not be heard to speak, his eyes were fixed upwards, and a calm and holy joy was visible on his countenance, and his lips were evidently moving in prayer and praise.

Two nights before his death he seemed in some small measure, to the great delight of those who were sitting up with him, to regain his vigour and all his collectedness ; the lamp of life seemed to burn up afresh. He said to his dear wife and son, “ Oh ! what should an old sinner like me do now without the atonement ? Jesus is all in all. Hallelujah to God and the Lamb ! ” And then he said, “ *They are singing ‘ Hallelujah to Jesus.’* ” And on a part of that hymn being repeated to him—

“ Hallelujah, they cry,  
To the King of the sky,”

his countenance beamed with joy, and he said—“ That’s it, that’s it—yes—yes—they are singing ‘ Hallelujah ’ to Jesus. And I shall be there !—I am coming too ! ” A short time after this he reached his hands out, and looked as if he had seen the glorified spirit of his dear departed daughter, and called out her name several times. Those that were with him felt it to be a very solemn time ; they felt they were quite on the verge of the spirit-world ; and though they could not see anything, who can say that the dying saint was not permitted to take one look within the veil that divides time from eternity for his encouragement to hold out to the end ? “ Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation ? ”

He gradually got worse ; and from this time it was with great difficulty that anything could be heard that he said ; but listening very attentively, the following precious sayings were gathered from his lips :—“ My weakness will not allow me to shout. If I had strength, I would tell you about the goodness of a faithful God. I shall soon be where there is no more sorrow or pain, and God himself shall wipe all tears away. Death shall not reach that place ! What a blessed hope is ours ! Jesus is very precious—but I shall soon see Him face to face. In this identical body I shall see for myself my smiling Lord. The glorious sight !—oh ! the glorious sight ! ” Almost the last words that he was heard distinctly to utter, the day before his death, was on being asked if he wanted anything ; he made a strong effort to speak, and distinctly said—“ I am singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.” He was encouraged to hold on—that he could not be better engaged, for he had begun the song on earth that would be continued in heaven.

“ Joy through his swimming eyes did break,  
And meant the thanks he could not speak.”

On the Sunday evening he had another severe attack of sickness, and gradually and peacefully sunk into his blessed Saviour’s arms, and his happy spirit left the clayey tenement to be for ever with the Lord. He died in the presence, and soothed by the sympathies and prayers of all his sons—providentially there—and his dying eyes were closed by them.

Thus died this beloved servant of the Lord, the loving husband, and the affectionate father, in the bosom of his family, in the seventy-third year of his age, and in the fifty-seventh year of his connection with the Methodist society. But “ he, being dead, yet speaketh.”

To say he had not his failings, would be to make him more than man. He had them, and he knew it ; and many an anxious hour has it cost him, and many an agonising prayer has he offered up to God that the “ thorn in the flesh ” might be removed. He was naturally of a quick and warm disposition ; and he found it required great grace that this constitutional infirmity might be kept down, and that Christ might

“ Lay the rough paths of peevish nature even,  
And open in the breast a little heaven.”

He had a warm and philanthropic heart, and his

“ Pity gave, ere charity began.”

His hand was always open to relieve suffering humanity, by all means, and above his means. The tale of the widow and fatherless, and “ him that had no helper,” melted his heart, and his hand invariably relieved the needy.

He had a great reverence for the name of God. He would seldom use that name abruptly, but would almost invariably preface with the “ Holy, blessed God.”

Let us imitate him in his love to God, his zeal for His cause, in visiting the sick, and follow him so far as he followed Christ.

## LOST OPPORTUNITIES DEPLORED.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. STEPHEN BRIDGE, M.A.

PREACHED IN EMMANUEL CHURCH, CAMBERWELL,  
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, NOVEMBER 14, 1847.

*"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."*—  
Jeremiah viii. 20.

In reading the writings of those "holy men of old who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," the reader must have been struck with the degree in which their whole minds seem to be absorbed with the great subjects upon which they treat. Religion was not with them, as it is with multitudes now, a mere idea, a beautiful sentiment, an empty name, an inoperative nothing; wherever they went and whatever they did, it went with them and worked in them. They were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. Not content with acknowledging in general terms a Being far above them, for whose power nothing was too vast, and for whose inspection nothing was too minute, to know Him, to serve Him, to enjoy Him was with them the great end of their existence; everything was eloquent of Him, or of their future unchangeable and imperishable destiny. Not only did the sun, "travelling in the greatness of his strength," or the moon in her brightness, or "the stars in their courses," proclaim the eternal power and Godhead of Him whom they served, and remind them, as they walked the firmament, of the time when they should "shine as the stars for ever and ever," but the seasons of external nature, as they came and went in swift succession, seemed like a volume which had God for its Author, whose leaves the hand of time was ever turning over, and whose pages were filled with lessons profitable for righteousness.

We should, then, be acting strictly in the spirit of the inspired writers, if without further remark we proceeded to apply this passage to certain states and conditions in the moral history of man. Before, however, we do so, we must glance for a moment at the connection in which the words are found. The prophet is describing, as with a pen dipped in blood and with letters of fire, the awful calamities that should come upon the Jews, during the time that their city should be besieged by the army of the Chaldeans. Their sins, deep, dark, and multiplied, aggravated by being committed against light and knowledge, against innumerable mercies, against the warnings of prophets and the forbearance of God, had awakened that fierce wrath of the Almighty which is so slow to rise, so ready to abate. Terrified by the on-coming storm, whose thunders they heard rolling in the distance, they look for succour, day after day; they hope for the aid of some friendly power, or for the interposition of that mighty arm which had compassed them with its protection as with a shield; but no help comes, the time for mercy's visitations had passed by; and now just as the wrecked mariner, who from some lonely rock has looked in vain for the help which hope had told would come, feels an anguish of soul coming over him, more bitter than the bitterness of death, so at last from this doomed people all hope is taken away; they see captivity or death before them. "The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes and sending, because He had compassion on His people and on His

dwelling place; but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy." And it was just as the overwhelming storm brake upon their heads, that they uttered that thrilling exclamation which rent the prophet's heart, and should make both the ears of him that heareth it to tingle: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

And now, brethren, changing the application of these words from that which is temporal to that which is spiritual, we may regard them as placing before us one or two important truths. First, that there are seasons specially favourable to seeking the soul's salvation; and, secondly, that if these be misimproved, the anguish will be proportioned to the opportunities which have been lost.

I. We say there are, in the history of every individual, (at least of every one upon whom the light of revelation has shone,) seasons specially favourable to the salvation of the soul, periods which, in the language of the text, may be called "the summer" and "the harvest" of the spirit; "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." We call them special, because we believe that concerning the whole span of our existence here it may be said—"Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." We admit that there are exceptions to this rule. Could we look into the records of Omniscience, into those books which shall be opened when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and when men shall be judged according to the things found written in the books, we cannot doubt but we should find some, ay, it may be, some among those who are going in and out among us, who are "condemned already," whose doom is as sure, as irreversibly fixed as the doom of those apostate spirits who are "reserved in chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." There are those who though "light has come into the world," "*love darkness rather than light*," and "will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved;" those whose spirit within them is hardened, whose consciences are steeled against impression, who can hear the threatenings of God without emotion, who have "pleasure in unrighteousness," in whose minds the fixed and deliberate determination has been come to, 'I cannot overcome this lust, I cannot break away from this companion, I cannot resist this temptation, be the penalty what it may; I have loved strangers, and after strangers will I go.' And from these the Holy Spirit of God, resisted, grieved, dishonoured, after He has long borne with them, departs never to return; and they are left to wander through the earth with a brand set upon the brow, deeper than that which marred the forehead of the unhappy Cain, a prey to their own hearts' lusts, the wonder of angels, the scorn of demons, till they have "filled up the measure of their iniquities," and sink at length into the lowest hell.

But if "God willing to show His wrath and to make His power known," does thus in some cases, as it were, "go before to judgment," this is not the general rule. Usually, during the whole life, as long as the lamp holds out to burn, the vilest sinner may return unto the Lord, under any circumstance and at any time. The gates of that sanctuary which have been opened by our Emmanuel, as a refuge for the guilty, are never shut; they stand open night and day, so that let a man, alarmed for the safety of his soul, come "at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning," he may enter in, and lay hold upon the horns of the altar, and find Him still seated on the mercy-seat, who never says to the seeking sinner of Jacob "Seek ye My face in vain;" and there that blessed Spirit, who "giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might increaseth strength;" and behold there the ranks of angels waiting with their harps, to rejoice over the new-born soul with joy, and to joy over him with singing.

Yet although these things be so, there are times, special seasons when the Mediator seems to show Himself in more than usual glory, and when the Angel of the covenant seems to impart to the waters of salvation an unwonted degree of quickening power, or rather, to speak in other words, when the mind is more susceptible of impression. It is not easy always to account for these

eras in the moral history of man. Suffice it to say, they seem to be a portion of Jehovah's plan in working out His purposes. We trace them in nature, for there are seasons when her mightiest powers appear to wake from their slumber, and to go forth working those vast physical changes which give to the natural world features altogether different to those which it had before. We see them plainly dated in the page of every nation's history. You cannot think of the Assyrian, Grecian and Roman empires, without at the same time remembering, how they had their seasons, times when they arose we know not how, when they seemed to gather strength from every struggle, to rise superior to every competitor, to wax brighter and brighter till they rose to meridian glory,—and times, too, when they declined, we know not why, before causes open and manifest alone to Him who is “the living God, and steadfast for ever and His kingdom alone that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion that which shall be unto the end.” In like manner, when we look at the intellectual world, we trace there a course which no one can define. There have been the *dark ages*, when stern and sterile winter forbade every well-spring of sound learning to give out its refreshing waters, when the tree of knowledge yielded no precious fruits, when the intellect of all men slept, when no mind rose to grandeur, when superstition, the handmaid of ignorance, walked abroad, busying the priest and the people, from the least even to the greatest, with visions and dreams and “lying wonders,” which might provoke the pity of the child, and the scorn of even the drivelling idiot. And so there has been the *golden age*. The mental hemisphere has been filled with constellations, which have not only lightened the world, as they fulfilled their course, but whose light has shone before men long after they had themselves gone down. Art has added to her stores with wondrous rapidity. Science, as if endued with power from on high, has lifted the veil from secrets, which had been hidden for ages and generations. Poetry has put on her beautiful garments, and given a charm to every region of knowledge or feeling through which she passed; and eloquence, as if for a time she had been gifted with the harps of heaven, has been heard uttering her voice with such power that every judgment seemed to be convinced, every passion of the soul to be controlled, and it appeared as though the mind of the world was so within her power that she could turn it whithersoever she would.

And so in spiritual things; “there is a tide in the affairs of men,” which, if duly improved leads on to happiness, and wafts the spirit to the promised land; but if neglected, leaves the soul exposed to certain and irremediable ruin. Times there are, when without any definite reason upon which we can fasten, our soul resembles a dry and thirsty land, hard to be impressed, bringing forth no fruit to perfection, when the pastures in which we have been wont to feed seem to yield no meat, when the sacred Scriptures, the sanctuary, the intercourse of Christian friends, the closet and all the varied means of grace, seem as if they had lost their power to enlighten and invigorate and refresh the soul; and then again, there are seasons when our God renews the face of the earth, the soul is as a watered garden, and as a spring of water whose waters fail not; the windows of heaven are opened, and blessings are poured down—the favour of God, “the light of His countenance,” is felt and realized like the gladdening and vivifying influence of the summer's sun; every turn in the path of God's providence develops new views of His goodness and grace and love, and from every ordinance which Jehovah has ordained for the strengthening and refreshing of the soul, fruit abounds to His account.

But if there are thus periods of failure and refreshing which we cannot account for, and which are known only to Him who hath put the times and the seasons in His own power, there are others when, in the nature of man, or in the circumstances in which he is conditioned, we can see there is something which may make his mind more impressible and more open to receive instruction. Such a season is that of youth. Then there is a tenderness of the spirit, which the story of the cross, and the love of Jesus are well fitted to affect; then memory has the power to store up lessons of instruction, which is unknown to those of riper years; then the cares of the world, the dustfulness of riches, the absorbing and distracting pursuits of business, do not



exercising their evil influence over the mind; then habit, that tyrant which in spite of reason and conscience and every better principle leads the sinner captive at its will, has not acquired irresistible dominion; then the yoke is comparatively easy to assume, and the burden grows lighter as the strength is increased. The mighty God, as if pleased with the kindness of youth, with the surrender of a light and unburdened heart, with the offering of the first fruits of existence to His service, seems to delight in giving to the youthful convert Divine illumination, the aids of His Spirit, and all those "peaceable fruits of righteousness," which are so hard to cultivate when year after year of delay has deprived the soul of many of its powers, and given to the world and the things of the world a fearful and destructive influence.

Then again: how often has the season of affliction, whether of mind, body, or estate, been one when the mind has been specially prepared to "attend to the things which belong unto its peace!" The beneficial effects of affliction on the heart and conduct, have been presented to us in men of all ranks and ages. "Before I was afflicted," says the psalmist, "I went astray." So the sacred historian records of Manassah: "When he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him." And who is there among the saints, who cannot say—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted?" It is this that softens the heart, that takes off the glare from earthly things, and makes the soul to feel, that however sparkling the streams of earth may be, nothing can satisfy its thirst, and give it abiding peace, but those waters of comfort and wells of salvation which God has provided for His people. How many are there here, who had for years thought little about religion, who can remember the vows which they made when they were in trouble! They had not succeeded in their schemes, losses came, business flagged, they had to "bear the burden and heat of the day," and then it was, while they were thus "brought into the wilderness," that they heard the voice of God "speaking comfortably" to them, and they thought seriously of seeking that better portion which the rust and moth cannot corrupt, and "where thieves cannot break through and steal." Or it may be, just at the time when they had acquired all that heart could wish, and had "goods laid up for many years,"—just as they were wrapping themselves up in their worldliness, and preparing to lie down in carnal ease and forgetfulness of God, then trouble came; health began to waste, or those who were to have partaken, as they increased the joy, have been taken away; and then, as in the sick chamber or at the grave, they have thought of their blighted paradise, they have felt that "man at his best estate is altogether vanity," that it is only as he enjoys everything in God, and has his "affections set on things above," and is with those around him looking for his home in the better country, and travelling towards it, that he can expect anything like permanent enjoyment and settled peace; and then it was they resolved to "seek the Lord with full purpose of heart," and said—"The Lord is my hope and my portion for ever." Thus does affliction, like the summer's dew, soften and fructify the heart.

So again: various events in life are peculiarly adapted to produce serious and saving impressions. Who is there, while I speak, that cannot recall moments of unwonted seriousness, misgivings and painful fears, which have been the result of some things which have come to pass in the movements of God's providence? You may have torn out and flung away the arrows of the Almighty, and hastened to heal up the wound which His hand had made with some of those expedients which the world provides and Satan has skilfully prepared to lull the pain, lest it should lead to the great Physician; but you cannot forget how you were once made to feel and think, ay, and even to resolve. The lesson remains deep graven on the fleshly tables of the heart; you cannot wipe it out; there it continues. "The heavens shall pass away," and "the earthly house of your tabernacle will be dissolved," and every particle of which your body is composed will be separated atom from atom; but when all these things shall come to pass, the record of those days when your whole soul was stirred within you will remain, a writing terrible as that which the doomed king saw written by a mystic hand upon the palace wall. Yes, the young man will remember that night when, after having stood at the death-bed of a

holy mother, and received the dying charge to follow her as she had sought to "follow Christ," she "fell asleep" in Jesus, and he retired to an inner chamber to weep there. How pungent was his grief; how apparently earnest his prayer; how did he lament his past absorption in the world, and forgetfulness of the soul, and determine that he would arise, shake himself from the dust, and gird himself for the service of that blessed Master, who in the hour of nature's final trial stood by His dying servant to give her perfect peace, and to conduct her, when in His strength she had vanquished death, to the abodes of pure, unmingled, and perpetual peace!

That these strong convictions are produced in men, some by one cause and some by another, when they, as it were, hear "the Spirit and the bride say, Come," when they are "not far from the kingdom of God," and they might, if they would, obey the Saviour's voice, be healed of their plague, and go forth and gather fruit unto life eternal, is a fact known to every man who has been brought within the range of Gospel truth, whether he has "received that truth in the love of it," or whether, after having wept and prayed and promised, he has again drunk the anodyne ministered by corruption's hand, steeped himself in forgetfulness of God, and perished in his sin.

But, brethren, these favourable seasons, when we might sow to the Spirit and of the Spirit reap life everlasting, will not always be continued. Judging that because you are not so familiarized with sin as not sometimes to shrink from it, because you are not yet altogether uninfluenced by the ordinances of religion, and without thoughts sometimes concerning the coming future, you may think that you will yet for a little longer continue in sin, that you will venture out a little from that holy ground where alone you can be safe, and yet keep so near the shore that in the hour of need you may see the harbour and be safe; but take heed lest ye be deceived; you have now the power to return; then spread the sail, and ply the oar. Return, O wanderer, return. Seek the Lord whilst He may be found, call upon Him whilst He is near; "whilst you have the light, rejoice in the light." The Spirit of the living God "will not always strive with man." "Sudden destruction" may "come upon you" at an instant, and you may be in eternity, where though you sow with untiring hand, and watch night and day, and water the seed sown with tears of agony and blood, you will never reap a harvest; thorns and thistles will the blighted soil bring forth to you; you will remain for ever unable to change one disposition, to perform one neglected duty, to attain one lost blessing, or recal one forfeited opportunity. Or you may be spared to something, we were going to say, far worse than this; to be "dead while you live," to be "a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men," of one who has abused God's mercy, and from whom it is withdrawn. There are those who outlive their opportunities, from whom Almighty succours are withdrawn, and who are left without the power to repent, return and live. Remember, brethren, though you may now have the influences of the Spirit within your reach, no man hath power over the Spirit to retain the Spirit. Your heart may be soft now, fitted to receive the good seed of the kingdom, but to-morrow it may be frozen up, hard as the nether millstone or the granite rock. Now your conscience may be awake; but to-morrow it may be cast into that deep sleep from which it can alone be awakened by the crash of your dissolving frame. Now you may be solicitous about the soul's salvation; but to-morrow indifference, cold and dull as death, may settle upon you, and you may "care for none of these things." Now ministering spirits group around you, bearing the messages of Heaven, some ready to hasten back to the waiting hosts in the celestial mansions, and tell of your repentance, and others ready to help you on your pilgrimage, and guard your steps and cheer you with the voice of promise till you have received "an abundant entrance" into the city of their God; but who shall tell what shall be on the morrow? To-morrow grieved at the hardness of your hearts, or hearkening to the command of incensed long-suffering, "Let him alone," they may have forsaken you and fled; and other spirits, spirits of darkness and of death, may gather round you, like the eagles round their prey, and may carry you, helpless, hopeless and undone, "whither ye would not," and then, as you wake from your infatuation, and instead of looking upon "fields white unto the harvest," see nothing but one vast illimitable desert, vows unaccomplished,

purposes unfulfilled, the much to do undone, you will in anguish of soul, which lost spirits alone can feel, or despair describe, exclaim, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved."

II. And this brings us to observe, secondly, that if these special seasons be misimproved, the anguish of the spirit will be proportioned to the opportunities which have been lost. They have, it may be, been *oft repeated*. If in pity for our lost and miserable and helpless state the blessed Spirit of our God had condescended to come down to this polluted earth, and make us one offer of salvation; if once He had appeared to rescue us from ruin and to aid us in coming to Him who put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, how aggravated would be the guilt, and inexcusable the folly of neglecting and refusing so great salvation! But what then shall the end of those be, who have in almost unnumbered instances, and through many years, put away salvation from them! And such there are—oh! many such! "All the day long," says the long-suffering God, "have I stretched forth My hand to a disobedient and gainsaying people." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered thy children to Me as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" And again, an apostle asks, (and his asking shews that it is possible,) "Despiseest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God calleth thee to repentance; but after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God?" What an awful gleam does this passage throw upon the perdition of the lost! How directly is it opposed to the deceptions Satan succeeds in palming upon his deluded votaries! They imagine, that because they are not altogether insensible to the motions of the Spirit, their occasional impressions retrieve and mitigate the general heinousness of their depravity, and that transitory signs of goodness diminish the ultimate amount of sin. "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?" How long will ye be deluded by the deceitfulness of sin? Who does not see, that in proportion to the opportunities enjoyed, but not embraced, must be the guilt and penalty incurred? Verily it is to be feared, that in the last great day when such stand before God in judgment, it shall be more tolerable for Satan and his angels than for them. "Better had it been never to have known the way of righteousness," [to have lived without hope, than after we have known it to turn away from it into the paths of the destroyer. To have the leprosy cleaving to us, when we lived on the very borders of "the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness," and heard the voice which said, "Wash and be clean:" to sink into the gulf of perdition, when a thousand times the ark of safety was wafted near us, and we were besought even with tears to enter and be safe: to perish when every method was employed to awe or to allure us—God speaking to us by patriarchs, by prophets, by apostles, by His own dear Son; to perish wilfully, surely this shall be as oil upon the eternal flame, this shall keep alive and renew the strength of the undying worm, and this sin the sting of death.

There are other reasons why the anguish of lost opportunities will be proportioned to the opportunities themselves, such as that others have been saved under them, and that they will never be renewed. But we must forbear; yet ere we close, we must ask our own heart and yours—What use are we making of the harvest of mercy, the summer of life, the bright days of salvation? Are we, even the best, the most spiritual, the most earnest amongst us, gathering in as much food for the soul as we might? Are we storing the mind with those sacred principles which it may feed upon for ever? Were the harvest to pass away, and the summer to close this day, are our garners filled with all manner of store, and are we rich towards God? The question is an all-important one: times and seasons are flying rapidly away. Another "harvest is past," another "summer is ended." And now just imagine what would our present feelings be, if the precious season had passed away without bringing a supply of food, leaving us to all the horrors of famine, aggravated by the miseries of approaching winter; imagine still how aggravated and inexpressibly dis-

troubling would be our state of mind, if our own carelessness had entailed this wretchedness upon us; if God having given us plenty, we had refused to gather; and you have a faint emblem of the horrible dread which shall come upon them, who shall enter upon an eternity for which they have made no or an inadequate provision, and discover when there is no remedy that "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and they are not saved." And yet thus it will be; mercies abused, despised, neglected, will be mercies withdrawn. "The summer" will appear in its glory; but it will not be for you. "The harvest" will put forth its golden treasures; but it will be for others. "The fruits of righteousness" shall abound; but with them you shall never fill your hand. That which you have sown, that only can you reap.

Then diligently use all opportunities for furthering your salvation. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand." Let not one ray of the summer's sun shine, nor one hour of life's harvest pass unimproved by you. Go to the Redeemer with hearts humble, low, full of submission, full of a disposition to yield yourself to grace. Go—cry, "Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." And the sun that sparkles in the firmament of the blessed shall be darkened, their harps unstrung, their glory tarnished—yea, the throne of Deity shall be upturned, His truth fail, all His attributes destroyed, rather than that prayer shall not be answered; for thus saith the Lord, to humble, praying, persevering souls: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

## COMMERCIAL PRESSURE, A SPIRITUAL TEST.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

HUGH M'NEILE, D.D.

PREACHED IN ST. JUDE'S CHURCH, LIVERPOOL,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOV. 14, 1847.

*"The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself."*—Proverbs xiv. 14.

MY brethren, a storm is a season of trial on the sea and on the land, in a forest of masts and in a forest of trees; it detects the unsafe and the unsound, separating them from the strong and the seaworthy. Exposure to privation, or even to short allowance, is a season of trial; it detects existing weakness, and a predisposition to disease, separating its easiest victims from the stronger and more robust. A commercial crisis is also a season of trial, with its characteristic detections, exposures, and victims. Some of these last appear in the gazette, and are "known and read of all men." Their dealings were in the outward and visible things of this world; in those things was their rise, and in those things is their fall. But such a crisis is a season of trial in higher matters; and it brings with it strange detections in men's hearts. I do not now speak of exposures to other men, though these frequently follow; my present object is to call your attention to those self-detections which usually follow a season of great commercial anxiety and agitation—to those self-morifications on the one side, and to those encouragements on the other, which are consequent thereon.

The word "backslider" is very expressive, and it is of frequent occurrence in the Scriptures of the prophets. It is a word which we rarely meet with except in dissertations on vital, experimental religion. It is a term, indeed, which some writers on religion seem to dislike; it appears to have been discarded by them as vulgar, or as savouring of bad taste. It will be enough, in this respect, for us, to perceive, that it has been used by men who "spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

But in order to understand the meaning, and to estimate the consequences, of a man's sliding back in religion, it is indispensable that we first have a right perception of the path in which he was previously standing or walking. This, therefore, must be our first point in considering the text.

In every visible Christian church, there are two distinct classes of persons: professors of serious religion, who in reality are not converted; and new-born, vital Christians. This leaves out, however, a third, and the largest class, consisting of all those who, having the baptism and the name of Christian, do not even make a profession of any serious religion, but live avowedly as if this world were their only object. These cannot backslide from God in this world, because they are already as far from Him as possible. Their next step, except they repent, and believe the Gospel, must be into an undone eternity. But I now speak especially of the two former classes, both of whom are likened by our Saviour to "virgins," as distinct from the ungodly world; some wise, who have not only a lamp for present use, but oil for an enduring supply; others foolish, who have no oil, but only a temporary lamp. For a time the outward circumstances of the Christian church may be, and in this age they generally are, such as to supply no discriminating test between these persons. Mere professors, such as I have alluded to, may be so enlightened in doctrine, and so

influenced in practice, as really to deceive themselves; and whatever misgivings they occasionally feel, they may, upon the whole, be satisfied that they are indeed Christians, and that their state is sufficiently secure. On the other hand, real Christians living among them may be so filled with anxieties, alarms, and self-reproaches,—their conscientiousness may assume so much the character of scrupulosity, that, although at times they may venture to think themselves right, yet, on the whole, they are rather disposed to "write bitter things against themselves," and to conclude that their condition is one of imminent danger. Whilst external matters are peaceful and prosperous, there is, as I have already said, no discriminating test between these two classes of persons; they cannot distinguish themselves. Yet there is, in reality, a vital distinction. The hearts of the professors I have alluded to are still with the world; but the worldly circumstances around them are so easy and prosperous, that no testing difficulty is felt on that side, and the accompaniments of a religious profession are so common-place, that no difficulty is felt on that side either. The hearts of real Christians are with the Lord; but to seem to be on His side is so easy, and their outward circumstances in the world supply so little of hindrance, so little of realised difficulty in their way, that there is no decided proof, even to their own minds, "whose they are, and whom they desire to serve."

Thus it is, in those seasons of prosperity, which we all naturally desire. There is, at such times, nothing to separate between the sound and the unsound; the voyage goes on smoothly, and the inexperienced apprentice seems to be as efficient in his place, as the thorough well-instructed seaman. But now the fine weather ceases, the sky is overcast, the clouds appear to billow out from the horizon, and the freshening blast is heard to whistle through the rigging. A period of anxiety and alarm sets in; affairs in which all are either directly or indirectly involved, become troubled; the even current of a man's pecuniary concerns is ruffled; he cannot now get what he wants, and pay for what he gets, as he did before; he must either do without something or he must fall upon some new scheme, or schemes, to meet the unexpected embarrassments, the unprovided-for demands, of extraordinary times. These circumstances affect his thoughts, make an impression upon his habitual imaginings and meditations; he thinks of them, he thinks in them, until he thinks of little else; before he is aware of it, he is "minding earthly things," which is another scriptural appellation for spiritual death. With all imaginable deceivableness, the heart engages in vain and useless fancies as to what would have been the state of affairs, had a different line been adopted at such and such a time. 'If I had not done that!' 'If I had not done this!' 'Oh! that fatal proposal! Unfortunate! that I should have hearkened to it and entered into it!' 'Oh! if I had only closed with that man when I first had an opportunity! I should then have had a large sum at command now, instead of being unable to meet my acceptances without incurring additional grievous losses.' And then, away runs the treacherous heart in a fresh train of vain imaginings: 'If I had such a sum at command in the present state of affairs, what a fortune might I make!'

Now thoughts of this kind—and I have but hinted at one of a thousand,—when they become habitual, or even very frequent, steal away the heart, and the things of God cease to have that power over the character which they before exercised. In other words, a "backsliding of heart" has taken place. This explains the meaning of the term. Of course it does not extend over the applications of it, which each must make for himself, but it applies to both the classes of persons to whom I have alluded,—to the deceived professor who had not a high standing to depart from, and to the tempted Christian who had.

When the deceived professor falls back, or becomes a backslider in heart, "he shall," to use the language of the text, "be filled with his own ways." "His own ways," if the truth were really known, without any veil or deception, either in himself or in others,—“his own ways” would be seen to have always been worldly ways. Christian ways were only put on and superficial with him; not in wilful hypocrisy—I do not speak of such a case—but in easy self-deception. His heart, in the real root of its affections, has

been with the world; money, or pleasure, or honour among men—self, in some shape or other, has been the real god of his heart.

And now, the most solemn judgment of the Lord God Almighty comes in the shape of successful worship of an idol. When the backslider in heart, who loved money, is permitted to succeed in making money, he is "filled with his own ways." When his anxious thoughts upon the subject have struck out some new scheme; when he has entered upon it with vigour, and prosecuted it with success; when he has brought it to such a favourable termination, that he has saved his threatened property, and even added largely to its original amount. When he may cease to be agitated upon the subject, but he has met with comfort; he is more worldly than he was before, more filled than ever with his own ways, and it may be said of him, "The last state of that man is worse than the first." When the backslider in heart, who loved pleasure, has so far broken through the restraints of his religious profession, as to plunge back again into scenes of worldly amusement, and time-wasting frivolity, he is then "filled with his own ways." When the backslider in heart, whose idol was the praise and honour of men, has attained this praise and honour, although, perhaps, by the sacrifice of those religious principles, or some of them at least, which he professed to value, he also is "filled with his own ways." In all such cases, we have fulfilments of that true, but disgusting proverb—"The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." The creature was washed, but its nature was not renewed, and when the artificial restraints which kept it down were withdrawn, the inherent disposition to uncleanness again betrayed itself, and the "sow" returned to her "wallowing in the mire." And yet, these persons, while thus sunk, have obtained, it may be, their object in this world, and are now become more and more the objects of admiration and envy to those around them. The judgment of God slumbereth; He is long-suffering; He does not deal with such persons in the summary way that He did with His people of old, who murmured against Him in the wilderness, and taunted Him with His inability to provide flesh for His people. "He brought water, indeed, out of the rock, but can He provide flesh for His people? God rained flesh around them thickly; He scattered feathered fowls upon the camp; they gathered and they ate, they were not restrained from their hearts' desire. But when the meat was between their teeth, the heavy wrath of God was upon them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel." This is written for our learning, and a fearful lesson does it convey to those who are allowed to have their own way. They "eat the fruit of their own way, and are filled with their own devices; for the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them."

Beware, then, my friends, of being "filled with your own ways." Some of you may have come out, or may be coming out, of the storm which has recently agitated men's affairs in town and in country, with apparent success. You may indeed have succeeded in the outward things of this world, but let me entreat you carefully to see whether these have not been "your own ways," whether your heart has not been set upon such ways all along, and whether your very success in the world may not be a judgment from God. How shall you ascertain this? I have no infallible recipe whereby you can ascertain it, but I have infallible instructions for you, under such circumstances, which will go far at least to sanctify what you call a blessing, and to prevent it from being turned into a curse. I have this to say,—honour God with your substance, and with the first-fruits of your increase; give this pledge at least that the money you have obtained is not the god that you have been serving; shew that you recognise God's supremacy by making a thankful acknowledgment to the service of Him who has blessed your efforts.

When the real Christian becomes a backslider in heart, he, too, "shall be filled with his own ways." When he yields to any of his enemies, those enemies shall have an advantage over him, and take revenge upon him; his sins shall become his punishment. His heart is not, it is true, wholly with the world; but neither is it wholly with the Lord. His ways are mixed ways—ways of conflict; he struggles in mingled sincerity and infirmity, and experiences alternations of defeat and victory. His strength is in the Lord, derived from

Him every day. On this account he must have daily communications with Him, daily meditations upon Him; there must be daily waitings at the posts of His door, daily petitions for daily supplies. Much depends upon the uninterruptedness of this daily fellowship. His is "daily bread," which will not keep over night; he cannot, through any means of grace, however luxuriant at the time, lay up such a stock as shall avail him during long interruptions of the communications from Heaven. The objects of faith must be brought repeatedly before him, or else the influences of faith will become languid and inefficient; the truths of the Gospel must be presented again and again to his mind, or else the power of the Gospel to save from this "present evil world" will not be operative upon his character. To this St. Paul plainly refers when he writes to the Corinthians, "By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you." "If ye keep in memory;" because, although this is a work of gracious sovereignty on the part of God, it is nevertheless done in accordance with our moral nature; it is done by maintaining motives, and motives are maintained by adequate objects. The objects of faith continue to create the motives, and the motives in a moral creature continue to secure the character; but if the objects be withdrawn, the motives are no longer felt, and the very springs of character are then invaded.

Thus the matter stands with the Christian. And now, when outward anxieties force the things of this world upon such a man's mind; when picturings, if I may so express it, of the businesses and secularities of life present themselves to him on every side; when his reading of the Scriptures is invaded and rendered ineffectual, the words, indeed, passing before his eyes, but his mind being occupied, not with their meaning, but with the fluctuations in the money market; when even in prayer he no sooner closes his eyes than, lo! upon the retina of his imagination present themselves a host of worldly intruders whom he would gladly dispense with, but whom the pressure of external circumstances forces upon his attention; he is then a man full of infirmity, and he runs the risk of having those remembrances of Divine things which supply the motives of Christian character invaded and driven out. When the wants, present or prospective, of his family, painfully mingling with the remembrance of the losses he has sustained, or is probably about to sustain—when these things force him into perpetual calculations as to what he is to do, and how he will find himself when balances are wound up and his affairs are brought to an issue,—what an exhibition is this of the world pre-occupying the man's mind, so that the objects of faith are not present as they once were! They do not lodge in his memory as they once did, and, instead of their influences being felt as they were formerly, counter-influences supersede them and tie him down more and more to the minding of earthly things. Then backsliding of heart takes place—in fact this is backsliding of heart—and then the evil thing that he has done towards God will prove to be a bitter thing to himself. He will then learn the meaning of that expression of the prophet Jeremiah, in reference to backsliding Israel, "It is an evil and a bitter thing to turn away from the Lord your God." Evil, in itself, and bitter in its consequences, his sin will, in truth, become his punishment,—he will be "filled with his own ways." He will not, however, be "satisfied" with them. And here comes the gracious difference between him and the character previously sketched. While the unconverted man is, under such circumstances, thrown back into what is really his native element, and becomes "satisfied" with "his ways," perhaps secretly glad of the occasion which has driven him back amongst them, the Christian cannot be satisfied with them; the world can never satisfy him. He shall then be "filled with his own ways" to nausea. God will make him sick of them in order that He may afterwards remove him from them.

My dear friends, consider these things. I may be speaking not altogether at random, though without any mental intention on my own part of referring to any of you in particular. I may be saying what many of you feel to be applicable to yourselves; and if so, you will naturally ask, what I as naturally turn to, what is the remedy—what is to be done in this case? Why, my brethren, your remedy is by faith. There is no other remedy. We can devise nothing new. Your remedy is by coming again to those objects of



faith, which create within man the motives of life ; especially to the Lord Jesus Christ himself, in the glory of His person, God and man, one Christ; in the suitableness and sufficiency of His redemption, magnifying God's law, enduring man's curse, making an end of transgression, bringing in everlasting righteousness, supplying all that the government of Jehovah requires in heaven, and ready to supply all that the infirmity of man requires on earth ; raised in our nature to the right hand of God, there "ever-living to make intercession," there "receiving gifts for men," that the Lord God may dwell among them, even the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven ; there ready to present every prayer offered in His name upon earth, and to make good His promise, that every one that asketh shall receive, every one that seeketh shall find, and that to every one that knocketh the door shall be opened. These glorious objects must be again and again presented. And see you not, my friends, that time is required for all this ? See you not, that if you be determined to run all risks by six days' uninterrupted devotion to the world, the Sabbath-day cannot effectually keep up devotedness to God in the heart ? A blessing indeed it is—a stay has it proved to many a tempted soul which has then had time to recollect itself, and again to recover a more heavenward frame. But I warn you, that, amid the earnest activities of a world like this, the Sabbath alone will not prove sufficient. Christians as you are, I warn you, that such is the constitution of your minds, that the pendulum cannot have six days' uninterrupted earthly motion suddenly checked on the Sabbath morn. It cannot in that case have a different swing on the Sabbath-day from that which it has on the other six days. The remembrance of the six days will intrude into the sanctuary, and cause you, in spite of yourselves, to be profaners of God's house ; making "the house of prayer," I will not say "a den of thieves," but, I may say, a house of money-changers.

If, then, you would give fair play to religious things, you must give them a portion of every day. Be not so set upon business that you cannot spare an hour every day for your soul's health ; be not so set upon this world's books that you cannot spare an hour every day for the Book of God. Keep your mind in contact with the objects of faith, or depend upon it you will backslide in heart more and more. I feel, however, that there is one difficulty in your way, and it is indeed one of the grand, gigantic difficulties which beset Christians in their course. You come in contact with the world ; you are engaged in active business ; you are employed in honourable emulation. Every department of business or occupation is fully stocked, and you are compelled by emulation to an earnestness which is indispensable even for obtaining a livelihood. You will be driven off the path, shouldered out of the way, if you attempt to go slower than others ; and if you go as fast as others, you are in danger of leaving religion neglected, or practically despised. I feel the difficulty, I admit it fully : I wish you to see that I am not exhorting you to a duty without appreciating your difficulties. But when all this is granted, when we fully enter into this difficulty—what then ? "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?" Oh ! then, run the risk of comparative defeat in the race of business, so far as daily attention to religion incurs such a risk ! But is it, after all, necessary to incur the risk of defeat ? May you not, by husbanding your time a little—may you not, by doing violence to the disposition that there is in almost all to waste the late hours of night, so as to drive the needful season of repose close upon the time of business in the morning—may you not, by resisting that propensity, and retiring early to rest, secure for yourselves, after sufficient repose, a healthful, early morning, a morning spent with God, before the current of a busy world sets in upon the soul ? Oh ! you may ! It is quite practicable. Some are actually doing this, and are reaping blessings from it day by day. Try, then, this one effort for recovery. Neither can your families suffer from this mode of proceeding on your part. I would not willingly invade the social hour, which after a day of business keeps up and strengthens all the softnesses and amenities of domestic life around the family hearth ; but there is a time for this also ; only watch for it, and keep it in view. Let not the precious hour slip away

in vain, idle, or useless conversation. Let all that is due to affection be yielded, but do not forget what is before you, or act like a creature of impulse, until driven by fatigue to rest. Husband your resources, without invading the tendernesses of the domestic circle; and one of the happy consequences will be, an early and sufficient rest, followed by an early morning spent in devotion. Thus will you keep the objects of faith before you; and, by the blessing of God attending them, you will keep the motives of faith alive within you. "This is the victory that overcometh the world"—"faith" in exercise day by day. What can drive the world out of man's heart, but his having there an object of more interest and more value to him?

I must now speak of the second clause of our text, which has reference to the real Christian: "A good man shall be satisfied from himself." By a "good man" is meant a real Christian, who is firm in his principles, and steadfast in his consistency—one who uses the means placed before him according to his impression of their importance, and who is, therefore, practically consistent. Such a man has a stream constantly within him; and, by keeping open the communication between it and the Fountain, he thus has always such a source of satisfaction within as arms him against the assaults of the world. It is not that the causes of agitation, of which I have been speaking, do not influence him at all; they do influence him; but then he has higher things in view. It is not that he neglects temporal things altogether—it is part of his duty to his family to attend to such things—but he loves other things better. Neither is it "from himself," as a source, that he is "satisfied." To take the passage thus, would be to contradict the full and expressive testimony of Holy Scripture. The Christian knows that in himself he is utterly destitute; he is ready to join in that saying of an eminent divine, that the height of creature perfection consists in a constant habit of drawing our happiness from Christ's holiness. But this being the source of his happiness, and the "well of water" which "springs up into everlasting life" being open in his bosom, and maintaining a communication with heaven, he finds within himself, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that satisfaction which practically excludes the impatience of a worldly temper. And thus, without going further for the present, without enlarging on the doctrine as to whence the satisfaction comes, we simply notice the fact of the Spirit's crying within him, "Abba," and bearing witness with his spirit, that not with carnal devices, nor with the wisdom of this world, but by the grace of God, he is ordering his affairs and his conversation upon the earth: he has this testimony within himself. I must repeat that I am not now discussing the question whence the Christian's satisfaction is derived, trusting that on that point you have previously been well instructed. It is, however, a fact, that this satisfaction exists in the Christian man; if he be faithful to himself, there must be a satisfactory witness within him.

The text declares that the good man who is true to his profession shall never be forsaken of the Spirit within him; that the fountain open within him shall continue its supply. Not that it will afford a wholesale treasure, which shall suffice for days, months, and years; but while in himself he is empty every day, the Christian shall never in reality be left empty while constant communication is kept up with the fountain that is always full. Yet, the immediate and proximate influence is a fountain within his own conscience, and thus shall he, in the words of the text, "be satisfied from himself."

Seek, then, to maintain this testimony of conscience; for they who forfeit it, run the risk of "making shipwreck of faith." The witness of an enlightened conscience is present safety as well as present satisfaction to the Christian. It is safety from the invasion of lower motives, because it is satisfaction in higher. Maintain this, my dear Christian friends, and you will be blessed in the enjoyment of it. Oh! watch over your hearts, and never be satisfied with any day on which you have not an inward testimony, that God is with you, and that you are His in His dear Son Jesus Christ.

Consider what things I have said this morning; and may God give you a right judgment and an honest application of them.

NOTES OF LECTURES  
ON  
PROPERTY AND PAUPERISM.  
DELIVERED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
BY THE  
REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.

LECTURE X.

WITH respect to the different expense of *assessed* and *unassessed* parishes, I beg leave to read an extract from my evidence on the Poor Laws, before a Committee of the House of Commons, in May, 1830 :—

“When I received my summons to attend this committee, I was very anxious to look into the original communications from the Scottish clergy. I have thus been able to collect a few instances, taken at random, which I think will make that matter clear. I have noted a few parishes from the Synod of Merse and Teviotdale, where there is an assessment; and compared them with parishes (of about an equal population) in the Synod of Argyle, which is not

MERSE AND TEVIOTDALE.					ARGYLE.				
Parish.	Popula- tion.	£	s.	d.	Parish.	Popula- tion.	£	s.	d.
Dunse .....	3,082	615	13	6	Kilmichael & Glas- sary.....	3,400	30	0	6
Eccles .....	1,820	327	0	0	South Knapdale ..	1,720	83	0	0
Coldstream .....	2,384	615	0	0	North Knapdale ..	2,184	15	10	0
Coldingham ....	2,424	316	2	2	Inverary .....	2,061	124	0	0
Jedburgh .....	4,454	631	17	4	Kilninian .....	4,064	20	0	0
Hawick .....	3,688	899	14	0	Lismore and Appin	3,407	24	0	0
Wilton .....	1,500	309	17	11	Kilmartin .....	1,453	15	0	0
Kelso ..	4,408	899	5	0	Rothsay .....	4,970	171	3	8
Morrobattle .....	983	306	0	0	Kilniver.....	983	22	0	0
	24,743	4,920	10	6		24,242	464	14	2

“For the great disproportion here observable there is no other circumstance I can assign, than the mere existence in the one set of parishes, and the non-existence in the other, of a compulsory provision. The counties where the method of assessment is most general, are among the most agricultural in Scotland. On the other hand, Cambletown is the most populous in Argyle-shire;—its population being 7,807, and the fund only £141 10s. 0d.: the employment of many of the people, too, is fishing; which is very precarious.—I will conclude this list of instances by mentioning another parish in Argyle-shire, Kilchoman; where the population is 3,131, and the fund £10.”\*

“There has not been one instance of starvation in an unassessed parish; and when you ask the reason, you find that the want of an assessment was compensated by the development of some virtue,—such as industry; or by the kindness of friends, or by the assistance of the charitable.

In the abolition of Pauperism, the great achievement is, not to do the thing, but to convince others that it can be done. There are two difficulties :—1. How is it possible, if we withdraw so prodigious a sum, that the people can maintain themselves, and avoid starvation? 2. How can we change an established

\* “Evidence before a Committee of the House of Commons, on the subject of a Poor Law for Ireland.” Published in Volume 16 of Dr. Chalmers’s Works. (“Christian and Economic Polity,” Volume 3.) See Pages 294 to 296

system, without, in the convulsion, destroying the framework of society? The first of these difficulties will be considered in the present Lecture. Supposing, then, the Poor-Rates to be withdrawn, there are four sources of compensation:—

1. *Self-Preservation.*—This principle would return in force, when the disturbing power was removed. One parish spends Seven Thousand Pounds a year on the poor; and there are many parishes even worse;—some in which the rate amounts to One Pound for each of the population. Now we consider, that if the Poor-Laws had not existed, one half of these paupers would have found subsistence, from the urgency of the self-preserving principle. Hence, if we retrace our steps, here is a mode of diminishing the amount of Pauperism by one-half.

2. *Relative Affection.* We are not setting up a new principle; but removing an obstacle in the way of a principle of nature. The abolition of the law of Pauperism would be nobly followed up by a resurrection of the social affections. I received from Sir Thomas Acland a note, about children abandoning their parents to the Poor's House. It also relates a case, in which so many leaves being allowed for every child in a pauper family, each ate its own separately. The proposed law should not be for the dismissal of the present paupers, but against the admission of new ones. I suppose this source of compensation to take half of the paupers left by the former; though I believe it would absorb the whole.

3. *Kindness of Neighbours.* I suppose this source of compensation to reduce the number of paupers to one-eighth; though I am quite sure it would do a great deal more. In the Poor's house visited by Mrs. Fry, when (as a punishment) tea was withheld from any of the women, the others (on such occasions) made it up to them.

4. *Sympathy of the Rich.* This would become larger and freer; and would account for the remaining eighth of the paupers. All these spontaneous principles, which are in operation in unassessed parishes, are destroyed by the principle of Pauperism in England; and, notwithstanding the Poor Laws, how loud is the cry of distress there! After all the public allowance, you have still as great an amount to provide for in private as before.\*

With respect to the ultimate effect of the law of Pauperism, I beg leave to read an extract from a Petition to Parliament, from a parish (Wombridge) in Shropshire, where the maintenance of the poor threatened to swallow up the whole value of the lands and houses:—"The annual value of lands, mines, and houses, in this parish, is not sufficient to maintain the numerous and increasing poor, even if the same were let free of rent. These circumstances will inevitably compel the occupiers of lands and mines to relinquish them; and the poor will be without relief, or any known mode of obtaining it, unless some assistance be speedily afforded them." It appears that the population of this parish was 1,900; of whom 620 were chargeable as paupers; who had cost, in three months, £602; while the whole annual value of property rateable for the support of the poor, was only £1,605.

In the severe winter of 1816-17, the Poor Rates seem to have reached their limit in the parish of Christ Church, Spitalfields:—"In some cases; we gave as high as five shillings a week. In the case of a large family, that would not sustain them; but there are several humane societies in the neighbourhood, and they get something there. A great deal of money comes from the Benevolent Society, and others. We also raised a subscription, to the amount of £1,600, for selling necessities at a reduced price to the poor. I have always contemplated with the greatest horror the consequences, if this subscription had not been established. The Poor Rates could not have been increased; for I and others in the parish believe, that if we were to raise the Rate to eight shillings instead of six, many would not be able to pay it."†

\* Under each of these four heads, the Lecturer quoted an extract from some of his published works.

† "Minutes of Evidence taken before a Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Poor Laws, in 1817." See the "Edinburgh Review" for February, 1818, Pages 284, 295, and 296 (No. 58, Volume 29); or Volume 20 of Dr. Chalmers's Works ("Political Economy," Volume 2), Pages 336 and 352.

That distinguished philanthropist, Mr. Hale, favoured me with the following particulars respecting that magnificent subscription, amounting to somewhere about £30,000, raised in 1816, for the distressed families in Spitalfields. His testimony is very distinct as to its having left in one of the parishes (Christ Church) a permanently increased Pauperism. The Committee who distributed the money, were gentlemen of the greatest respectability;—attending numerously, every morning, as early as eight o'clock (winter); indefatigable in their daily exertions, which occupied almost their whole time; and unremitting in their investigations to guard against imposition. But the pernicious vanity of all public charity for the relief of indigence was most impressively taught by the fact, that much of this money was given to unworthy objects and impostors; and that many of Mr. Hale's own workmen, earning from fifteen to twenty shillings a-week, received from three to four shillings a-week from this fund. Discoveries like these induced the Committee to put an end to the distribution, although they had still left about £7,000; of which £1,000 were given to the "Spitalfields' Soup Society," and the rest (at various periods) to the Spitalfields' Benevolent Society." Many cases of Pauperism were permanently fixed on the parish, where their burden was felt for years afterwards. A similar effect was produced in the neighbouring parish of St. Leonard, Shoreditch; where the relieving overseer (Mr. James Holden) states:—"When the relief from the subscription ceased, a number of those who had been partakers of it, but who had not before applied for parochial relief, became paupers on the parish; and I believe it had the effect of increasing their pauperism."

From all this we learn, how easily a general managing body may be led astray; and that the only efficient way of administering relief, is by means of small independent jurisdictions. If Spitalfields were divided into parishes of moderate size, each might be maintained, from its own resources, in comfort and independence, through every season of fluctuation; and the charity of *nature*, would supersede the charity of *law*.\*

\* For more particular details, respecting this and other parishes, see a long Note, extending from Page 251 to Page 255 of the "Christian and Civic Economy," Volume 2. Only the first half of this note is republished in Dr. Chalmers's Works, Volume 15 ("Christian and Economic Polity," Volume 2), Pages 158 to 160. We need not point out to our readers the obvious bearing of this Lecture on the Irish Pauperism of 1846-7, and the gigantic system adopted to relieve it.

## WHERE ARE THE DEAD ?

### A Funeral Sermon,

BY THE

REV. JOHN VAUGHAN, LL.D.

Of St. John's College, Cambridge.

PREACHED IN ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH, BRIXTON,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 21, 1847.

*"Man dieth, and wasteth away : yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"—Job xiv. 10.*

My brethren, we are led to the consideration of this important portion of Holy Writ, by the removal from time to eternity of no less than four members of our church militant, who formerly, in this sanctuary, worshipped the God of their fathers. This, indeed, is an event that speaks forcibly this morning to every heart, and reminds us all, that "here we have no continuing city," and that this world is not our home. During the past week, three have been laid in the silent tomb ; and their spirits are gone to

"That bourne from whence no traveller returns."

The voice of inspiration declares—"It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that the judgment." Our entrance and continuance in this transitory state, is fixed by our Almighty Creator, "in whom we live and move and have our being."

Seeing, then, that these things are so, well may the apostle Peter exclaim—"All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away ; but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word, which by the Gospel is preached unto you."

It may be needful to observe, that man was originally formed to be a representative of God's moral perfections—namely, His wisdom, goodness, holiness, and truth. In fact, the Almighty could have had no other design in creating him, but to feel the self-satisfaction (if we may so speak,) of acting in a manner suitable to the exalted dignity of His own immaculate nature and character, and to view a creature, every way worthy of its Divine Author—a creature, that should possess the needful powers to contemplate the Divine perfections—admire the Divine works of providence and grace, and express the most ardent blessings in thanksgiving and praise. But alas ! by the apostacy and rebellion of our first parents, the scene is changed, and holiness and happiness must now be sought after—

"In fairer worlds on high."

It is an acknowledged truth, that Job very justly described the state of all men, when he said—"Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble :"—(yes, we are all alike born to it, being born in sin ; and sin and trouble go together. Hence it is, that all men have their troubles, afflictions, and miseries—some of one sort, and some of another ; or, as the original word signifies, are "full of commotion, disquietude, and uneasiness :")—"he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down" (by death) ; "he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." But for our consolation, He who hath conquered death graciously says, "I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die."

We would here observe, that death may be said to be of three kinds—namely, natural, spiritual, and eternal. Natural death consists in the cessation of all the motions of the blood and lungs, and a separation of the soul and body ; spiritual, or moral death is a privation of the image of God in the soul ; and eternal death is the everlasting separation of the soul, from communion with God,—to which Job doubtless alluded, in the nineteenth chapter of this book, where we read—"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand

at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."

The immortality of the soul (at least to a certain extent,) may be regarded as an article of faith by those who are strenuous advocates of natural religion; but it is the province of revelation alone, to inform us, how the ashes of the dead shall be recollected and remodelled, and the dry bones become impregnated with life, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump:" so beautifully described by the apostle—"when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

In selecting this memorable declaration of the patriarch Job, it is not our intention to make any further reference to our departed friends, excepting that we may by Divine grace be enabled to "follow them, so far as they followed Christ," together with all those who have entered the mansions of the blessed, and are now inheriting the promises; and for this end, it behoves us rather as individuals to examine the foundation, upon which we are building our own hopes for eternity—for with many of us it may be justly said, that the "time of our departure is at hand." Happy, indeed, will it be then for us, if in that trying hour we can say with the apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also, that love His appearing." Thus a solution may easily be given to the question in our text—"Man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"

In these memorable words we have, first, a solemn declaration, which deeply concerns us all; and, secondly, a momentous inquiry made.

I. We have, in the first place, a most solemn and humiliating declaration relative to all men—"Man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost."

This is indeed a truth, for the proof of which no arguments are necessary: it is one which never has been, and never can be called in question—one, of which we are all witnesses; yea, we need only ask—

"Where are the fathers—whither gone  
The mighty men of old? The patriarchs,  
Prophets, princes, kings, in sacred books  
Enrolled? Gone to the resting-place  
Of man—the everlasting home—  
Where ages past have gone before,  
Where future ages come."

Their place in this terrestrial ball knoweth them no more—they are dead. We see others around us following them to their long home; we behold friends and neighbours falling into the grave, like leaves from the trees in autumn; and we know that the same destiny awaits ourselves. However various may be the opinions of men, on other subjects, and whatever doubts they may entertain on other points, each will agree in saying with the patriarch—"I know that Thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living."

The solemn declaration in our text, therefore, cannot be questioned. It may, however, be profitable for us to inquire—what are the lessons to be deduced from it?

We remark, first, that it is a very affecting truth: "Man dieth, and wasteth away." The Hebrew word here used by Job, denotes "a mighty man," one endued with superior strength, and is derived from the Hebrew root, which signifies to prevail, or excel in valour, or strength; and thus we learn, that the mighty men of the earth, the noble, the rich, and the wise cannot prevail, or overcome in the conflict with death—but like the new-born babe and the humble peasant, must "die, and waste away." Yes, man, the lord of this lower world, and the glory of creation, whom the great Jehovah made only "a little lower than the angels," and "crowned him with glory and honour," must "die and waste away;" even man, "made after the image of his God," gifted with reason, and endued with many excellent faculties—the only creature that treads the earth, who is capable of knowing, worshipping, and serving his Creator—must "die and waste away."

And to this Job further adds—"Man giveth up the ghost." Now it is worthy of remark, that in the original the inspired penman here uses a different word for man—namely, "Adam," the appellative name of our human nature, and typical of the dust of the ground, from which our triune God formed man, when "He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Oh! then, my brethren, whenever we behold man, warm with life, flushed with hope, blooming in health, active, animated

enterprising, energetic, thinking, reasoning and conversing—let us not forget this affecting consideration, that the seeds of decay and death, are even now sown within his frame; that when a few more suns shall have rolled away, he will be a lifeless corpse—cold, motionless, and mute—wasting away in the grave—a prey to corruption, and the food of worms.

Secondly, the declaration in our text affords us also an instructive lesson; for it teaches us, that man should be humble. Alas! how inconsistent and absurd it is, for any of us to be high-minded, or to indulge feelings of vanity, pride, and self-importance, knowing that we must so soon die, and “see corruption!”

Moreover, we should learn from it, the value of time; for if man must so soon “die, waste away, and give up the ghost”—if the time allotted us in this, our probationary state, be only limited—if our last day and our last hour on earth, must soon arrive—how precious is the present time! how diligent should we all be, in redeeming it! In fact, ought we not to tremble at the very thought of misemploying it? And therefore, how careful should we be, to devote it to the great ends and purposes for which our Creator has entrusted it to us, remembering that we are only stewards, and in the great day of reckoning we must each give an account to Him of the manner in which it has been employed, as well as the use made of the other talents committed to our care!

But we may also further learn from this solemn declaration, that we must all die—the nature of sin, the infinite evil, and the awful consequences of it. For what is death, but the fruit of sin? If man had never sinned, man had never died. “The wages of sin is death” “By one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” It may be said, that spiritual death, the death of the soul, seems principally alluded to, in these passages of Scripture; but we must not forget, that they are also equally applicable to temporal death—the death of the body,—for this is likewise the fatal consequence of man’s transgression of his Maker’s law. For instance, if Adam had remained steadfast in his obedience to Jehovah, he and all his posterity would have lived for ever—none would have had to pass through the dark “valley of the shadow of death”—none would have “died and wasted away.” Whenever, therefore, you think of death, and of all the solemn circumstances by which it is attended—the various diseases, to which mortality is liable, and the acute pains, which are often its forerunners, together with the pangs and struggles of dissolving nature—the shroud, the coffin, the grave, and the worm—let me beseech you, my brethren, to regard all these as the lamentable consequences of sin—for in them we behold the great evil of sin, together with God’s hatred and wrath denounced against it.

Surely, therefore, it must be admitted, that if we are anxious to inhabit the mansions of holiness and peace, we must learn to hate sin of every kind, and to shudder at the thought of committing it; yea, to shun it as our greatest bane, our bitterest enemy, and to turn from it, as we would from the destructive adder in our path, however pleasing and alluring the form in which it may present itself to our view; and above all, to seek for Divine grace, to be enabled so to do, praying continually and fervently for deliverance from the pollution, the power, and the love of sin.

We may further learn from this instructive lesson, that God will most certainly execute the judgments that He threatens in His holy Word. When the Lord denounced death as a punishment of transgression, He said to Adam, in reference to the fruit of the forbidden tree—“In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Satan, however, persuaded Eve, that what the Lord had threatened, He would not perform:—“Ye shall not surely die,” said the tempter; and Eve, unhappily for herself, and all mankind, listened to the suggestion. We know the result. The falsehood of Satan, and the truth of God, were manifested in the infliction of the threatened punishment. And is it not still one of the crafty devices of the great adversary of mankind, to persuade men, that God will do much less than He says; that He will not execute the awful judgments denounced in His holy Word, upon impenitent offenders? Oh! my brethren, let us not listen to the deceitful suggestions of Satan, which our own deceitful hearts are but too ready to second, but learn from the awful proof of the unfailing truth and inflexible justice of God, which death affords, that “He is not a man that He should lie, of the son of man that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?”

The declaration in our text contains the most important information, and deeply concerns us all; for all—high and low, rich and poor, old and young—must die, “waste away, and give up the ghost.” Yes, it is the most impor-



tant information that could possibly reach the ears of mortals; for if it be, admitted, that the present life is our only state of probation for eternity, (and this surely, none will venture for one moment to question,) bear in mind—death closes that state, seals our eternal doom, and fixes us in a state of happiness beyond conception, or of misery beyond description, and that for ever and for ever.

II. We have, however, in the words of our text, not only a most solemn declaration; but also, in the second place, a momentous inquiry is made—"Man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"

It is plain that this inquiry relates not to the body, but to the soul of man, which is indeed, as is here intimated, the man himself. Where the body is, may soon be ascertained. The very spot beneath, where it lies wasting away and mouldering into dust, can generally be easily pointed out. But where—oh! where is the immortal soul? It is the body only that dies—the soul can never die. While the body lies wasting away in the dust, the soul is still in existence, it still thinks and feels—is blessed, or "tormented"—is happy, or is miserable.

This is evident from Scripture. "To-day," said the Saviour to the dying thief upon the cross, "to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise:" not at some future distant period, but "to-day." St. Paul tells the Philippians—"I am in a strait, betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better; nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." He was aware that his longer continuance in this "vale of tears," that he might exhort, and comfort, and charge them, would be more beneficial to them; but as far as regarded his own feelings and prospects, he longed for death—he had "a desire to depart," that he might the sooner enter upon the possession of the happiness, which, he was divinely assured, awaited him. But he would not have felt in the strait which he describes—he would not have desired, so ardently, the moment of his departure, had he not been fully persuaded, that as soon as he should depart this life, he would be with Christ. The same persuasion, this inspired apostle elsewhere thus expresses:—"I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ." This clearly shows us, that he regarded the hour of his dissolution, as the period in which he should be for ever with his glorified Lord, and in the enjoyment of happiness, "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive."

The same great truth, which is so clearly established by these passages of Holy Writ, is likewise intimated in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and thus recorded by St. Luke:—"It came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Here it is obviously implied, that this was done immediately—that no sooner was he dead, than the angels took charge of his soul and conducted it to the mansions of bliss. "The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." Now it is manifest, that while the body was in the tomb, the soul was in torments. Guided, then, by the light of Scripture, we may safely find an answer to the solemn inquiry—"Where is he?" For the very moment the soul bids farewell to this world he enters the world of spirits, enters upon a state of everlasting happiness or woe.

Here, then, my brethren, these important questions come at once before us:—Was he really one who had experienced the second birth; a heaven-born soul, a meek and humble believer in the Friend of sinners; one who redeemed the time, and duly improved every opportunity granted to him in this transitory world, and while it was "the accepted time, and the day of salvation," sought and found acceptance with his God? Was he one who had repented and been converted from "the error of his ways," through the grace of the Holy Spirit, and whose sins had been blotted out in "the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," even "the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sin?"—one who had lived "the life which he lived in the flesh, by the faith of the Son of God?" And is it inquired by any, "where is he?" Inspiration makes the reply:—"He has entered into peace," amidst the congratulatory salutations of kindred spirits; while every golden harp was strung, to welcome him into the celestial city. Yes, the very instant the brittle thread of life is cut asunder, and the soul of the believer in Jesus is disentangled from the tenement of clay, in which it was imprisoned, it flies to the regions of purity and peace, and a convoy of angels are appointed to conduct him to his promised rest, to the enjoyment of uninterrupted bliss which shall never, never fade away.

— "Oh! happy day! that breaks our chain!  
That manumits; that calls from exile home;  
That leads to nature's great metropolis;  
And re-admits us through the guardian band  
Of elder brothers, to our Father's throne."

But we must now, my brethren, take also another view of this subject; and

although it is the dark side, we dare not overlook it, lest the blood of that unhappy class to which it refers should be required at our hands, for proclaiming "peace," when God himself has declared—"There is no peace to the wicked." Hence should it be asked—"Where is he," who trifled away his "day of grace," and not only neglected but refused to accept the offer of a full and free salvation which the Gospel proclaims ? "Where is he," who lived and died, impenitent and unrenowned ? Here again we must resort to the Scriptures of truth, as our unerring guide, in the solution of this question ; and alas ! there we are told, he has entered upon an inheritance of everlasting wretchedness—where hope never comes—where the voice of mercy shall never be heard—where the only sounds are those of "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth"—where the only feelings are those of anguish, and torture, and despair—where mis-spent Sabbaths are bitterly deplored, and the means of grace that were once possessed, increase the condemnation.

In a review of this subject, well may we exclaim with Moses : "Oh ! that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end," and examine their own prospects for eternity, daily seeking Divine aid, to enable them to prepare for "the hour of death," and "the day of judgment." And here, my brethren we would ask, "as stewards of the mysteries of God"—Have you made this the grand business of your life ; namely, to prepare for death—to lay up, not merely treasures on earth, but treasures in heaven ? Oh ! do not banish from your minds the solemn declaration, and momentous inquiry in our text ; but remember, prepared or unprepared, you must soon die, must soon "give up the ghost," and waste away in the dreary chambers of the grave. The solemn words—"Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," must soon be pronounced over our lifeless bodies ; and God only knows how soon, or suddenly.

"Suffer," then, "we beseech you, my brethren, the word of exhortation ;" and permit that secret monitor, conscience, to pronounce this day its faithful verdict—whether you are living for time, or for eternity. Leave no longer unanswered and undecided this momentous question, "Are you prepared to die?"

If you are, indeed, really prepared for this change ; if your "loins are girded about, and your lamps burning ;" if you have repented of sin, which nailed the Redeemer to the fatal tree, and by Divine grace, have "washed your robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," for sinners slain ; if you have committed your souls to the keeping of Jesus ; if you are living a life of faith on the Son of God, panting after holiness ; happy, thrice happy are ye ; for to you, death will then come deprived of his terrors, disarmed of his sting, "swallowed up in victory." Yes, death will then come to you, as an angel commissioned to place upon your heads a crown of unfading glory, to give you possession of "the rest which remaineth for the people of God," to usher you into those mansions, where "there is fulness of joy," where "there are pleasures for evermore."

But if, on the contrary, you seek not, at a throne of grace and mercy, this needful preparation of heart and life ; if you die in the ways of carelessness and sin, formality, lukewarmness, and self-righteousness ; in a word, if you live and die without God, without an interest in the salvation wrought out by Christ, death will then assuredly come to you with his sting, will come to you as the "king of terrors," will come to you, not as angel of peace, but as an evil spirit, to seal your doom, to usher you into the abodes of endless misery and woe.

While, then, your lamp of life continues to burn ; yea, before it be too late, we would entreat all who are not "seeking the kingdom of God, and His righteousness," to pause for one moment, and "consider their ways." As yet, it is not too late to "flee from the wrath to come ;" for the voice of mercy still cries—"Seek ye the Lord, while He may be found ; call ye upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Obey, then, this Divine invitation, and all will be well. Live, henceforward, at the foot of Emmanuel's cross, with eternity ever in your eye, and heaven in your hearts ; and then, indeed, shall your death be happy—for when called to enter the dark "valley of the shadow of death," the Lord has engaged to support and bless you ; for "precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of His saints." You will then be enabled to lay your sinking head upon your dying pillow, with comfort and composure, saying—"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace ; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

That this may be the dying experience of us all, may the Almighty, of His infinite mercy, grant, for Christ's sake.

## THE OBJECT OF THE MISSION OF THE COMFORTER.

### A Fifth Sermon,

BY THE

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AT PRESENT OFFICIATING IN EXETER HALL.

*"And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."*—John xvi. 8—11.

THE preceding verse I have previously explained, and have showed how it was expedient that Christ should go away. The very beautiful character under which the Spirit is set forth—namely, that of the Comforter, I have also endeavoured to illustrate. To-day I proceed, in dependence upon His strength, as fully as the limits of a single discourse will allow, to explain the three-fold object of the mission of the Comforter; first, His convincing "of sin"—secondly, "of righteousness"—and thirdly, "of judgment."

Before proceeding, however, I may explain to you that the word "reprove" does not fully and strictly embody the idea of the original. "To reprove the world of sin" is one thing; but, (as the original expression beyond all doubt implies,) "to convince the world of sin" is quite another thing. The reproof of sin has been the practice of philosophers, the object of poets, the office of moralists, the aim of satirists, in every age. Every excellence, by its exercise, reproves the opposite. Parents reprove their children; silent virtue reproves obtrusive and offensive vice. But sin may be reprov'd, and yet it may not be eradicated; sin may be silenced by exposure, and yet it may not be subdued by a power adequate to exterminate and to destroy it. Hence the reproofs of the world have fallen upon the sins of the world, whether those reproofs have been administered by poets or philosophers or by parents, too often as the wind falls upon the bleak hill, or the waves of the sea beat upon the solid rock,—leaving not an impression, or vestige, or memorial, behind. But the strict meaning of the word which is here translated "reprove," is as it is translated in other portions of Scripture, "convince." It is also translated, "rebuke;" and in every lexicon that I have opened, it is defined to be—"to reprove irrefragably; to refute entirely; to convince of error; to correct by chastisement; to bring to light; to expose; to convict." These are the words that correspond to the original here; and it means therefore that the Spirit shall not only reprove the world—but, as it ought to be rendered, "shall convince, or convict, the world."

Now what seems to be implied in the expression to "convince," or to "convict?" It means, to bring home sin to one's judgment, and to render all denial impossible; to bring home sin to one's conscience, and to render all evasion absolutely impracticable. It means, to work into the very heart a living and an abiding sense of sin, that never shall be destroyed—to unveil sin in its own hiding-place—to detect it when it lurks in the core of the most exquisite bud, or when it nestles in the bosom of the most fragrant and the most beautiful flower—to render sin incapable of concealing itself by a mask—to fix upon it the sinner's eye so intently, that he shall see it lurking in the recesses of his soul, lying where he never suspected it to be before, nestling amidst the affections he thought holy, clinging to the habits he thought beautiful, and staining all his nature so entirely by its venom, that he shall feel that none but the Omnipotent Spirit of God can enable him to get rid of it.

This, then, is the full import of the expression: "The Spirit shall convict, or convince, the world of sin."

\* For the previous Sermons of this Course, see *ante*, Nos. 1,358, 1,361, 1,349-50, and 1,366.

It is easy to convince a man of outward offences—to show that they are so,—but it is difficult, nay, so difficult that none but the Eternal Spirit can reach, and Omnipotence achieve it—to convince the honourable, the great, the upright, the moral, that all their excellencies are like flowers and leaves torn from the root, and doomed soon to fade, and that the only excellencies that will survive the storm, and bid defiance to the grave, and spread their petals and bloom in amaranthine beauty, are those which spring from the living principle imparted by the Holy Spirit of God.

Many have tried to “convince of sin,” besides the Holy Spirit. Conscience tries; and sometimes the world speaks as if conscience were the only standard of what is true, and the only criterion of what is holy; but I need not inform you, my dear friends, that conscience, just like every faculty in man, has suffered by the fall. The intellect has been dimmed, and cannot see clearly; the heart has been hardened, and cannot feel profoundly; the conscience has become deadened and seared, so that it does not respond to truth and error, and holiness and sin, as it responded in Paradise. And therefore conscience can neither be a perfect standard of truth or error. I admit, conscience is seldom utterly dead: it may be stupified, it may be drugged, it may be bribed, its voice may be drowned amid the stir and bustle of the world—so that a man may get rid of its tormenting presence and hear it barking at his heels no more, for a season; but ultimately it will regain all its pristine energies, and thunder forth its accusations amid the stillness of despair. It needs no material flame, and no literal living worm, but only a quivering guilty conscience, to make Paradise a Pandemonium, and the sweetest nook of earth an intolerable hell.

Conscience, then, I say, while it lives, does try to convince men; but it fails to do so with any sensible results. It protests against a thousand sins; and no man sins without hearing the protests and remonstrances of that solemn monitor. You know that when you have plunged into what is wrong, a silent and a secret whispering has been felt within, more or less, positively protesting against it; but you have defied it, you have mastered it, you have bribed it. And after conscience has protested for years, and protested unsuccessfully, it becomes more or less stupified, and falls asleep, till the first sound of the summons from the judgment-seat quickens its dead and slumbering powers, and makes it reason again “of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.”

Or if conscience has not been lulled asleep by continuous sin—sin knowingly indulged in—it has then recourse to the only other expedient—to those atoning efficacies said to be in all the relics and prescriptions of an absurd superstition. It counts its beads, and connives at sin. The sin is perpetrated upon one side of the street, and conscience hurries to the opposite for its opiate, the confession-box, and gets absolution for the nonce; and thus sinning and thus being absolved, life ceases to be a struggle, the passions gratify themselves, conscience counts its beads, the sinner is at rest till he awakens from the dead, and stands at God's judgment-seat, and learns, when the lesson is too late, that he passed to eternity “with a lie in his right hand.” I saw instances of this, when I lately visited the coast of France. I there saw people, on the Sabbath morning, at the church door, selling their goods, running in to hear a snatch of the mass, and coming out again to deal with their customers. Or you will see the crucifix hanging over the orgies of the drunkard, and the statue of the Saviour looked at for consolation, while God's law is openly and deliberately violated under its shadow.

Such, then, is the effect of superstition—the other alternative, when conscience keeps alive.

But besides conscience, God's law has also endeavoured to convince of sin. There is the law of public opinion: this reproves some sins, while it connives at others; yet so far as it goes, it is delightful. One rejoices to see in the present day, that there is such a thing as a healthy public opinion; and in this land, where it spreads like the atmosphere, from the palace of the queen to the hut of the peasant, no man can commit wickedness openly without meeting with most eloquent and just rebuke. We have in this country a press, with all its faults, of unrivalled purity—a press that will not recklessly indulge in the persecution of the innocent; and I believe, with all its faults, it has never been without a word of protest in behalf of the right, the merciful, the good. We have also the law of Sinai. It commands, in the accents of thunder, the duties which it reveals by the lightning's flash; but that law

only speaks of outward acts; it lops off branches, it cuts off a main stem—but as soon as it has done so, a thousand shoots start from the root, and the latter end of that man is worse than the beginning. The only being, then, that can convince of sin savingly, really, deeply, is the Holy Spirit; and He so convinces the sinner of its condemnation, that he will rush with instantaneous speed to that only refuge, the righteousness of Jesus; and He so convinces of its vileness, that sin becomes to the Christian's soul what pain becomes to his physical economy. I do not believe we are as yet what we should be—in so thoroughly Christian a state, that we should feel sin to be to our consciences what pain is to our body. Prick the finger—every nerve thrills, till it reaches the seat of all feeling. Let a Christian touch sin, or come into contact with the unholy, and conscience responds to it, rebukes it, and his heart is pierced and pained by it.

It is so, then, when the Holy Spirit of God convinces of sin. He convinces us of its condemning results; He convinces us of its hateful character; He convinces us of its danger to our souls; and He convinces us of its detestable nature in the sight of a holy God. And, my dear friends, I cannot but just stop here to remark, that this is the very reason why a sermon preached to a thousand lays hold of the hearts and consciences of some, and seems to be to the ears of others but a piece of beautiful melody or exquisite music. In the one case, the preacher's arguments and eloquence have been the only convincing powers—in the other case, the Holy Spirit of God has taken the truths that the preacher told, and has so impressed them on the conscience that the impress has remained indelible for ever. And if, my dear friends, it be, as I solemnly believe it to be, the most responsible of all positions upon earth, to sit in these pews and hear this Gospel, at least honestly and faithfully proclaimed—if it be true that being so proclaimed it is "a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death,"—then I ask you, if it be not right, if it be not your duty, if it be not your interest, when you come into the house of God, that your hearts should rise to His throne, and that you should ask Him, with all the intensity of one that feels the importance of the subject, that He would make not only the preacher speak faithfully, but that by His Holy Spirit He would make the preacher's truths sink deeply into the inmost of your hearts.

I. Having noticed, then, in these preliminary remarks, the contrast that subsists between the operations of the Holy Spirit and the operations of all other agencies whatever, I notice now that one special sin is made the subject of the conviction of the Spirit of God. It is not said here that He shall convince the world of that by which the world is frightfully stained—its intemperance,—or, that He shall convince the world of that by which the world is no less branded—its avarice, its covetousness, and its selfishness. These are sins of flagrant enormity and of deepest dye, and I do not mean to say one word that may tend in the least degree to imply that these sins are not hateful and horrible in the sight of God, as well as in the judgment of Christians; but there is one sin which outweighs them all in its guilt—which is darker and deeper still in its characteristics,—a sin that lies too at every man's door—at the door of the greatest philanthropist and at the door of the most notorious felon,—a sin of which we have all been guilty, but from which, I trust, we shall all be delivered,—a sin that ties to us all sins, and prevents the forgiveness of any sins; and that is the sin which the Spirit of God singles out as the great condemning sin of the world. "He shall convince them of sin, because they believe not on Me." Strange it is, but no less strange than true, that this is just the sin of which we have no conception, except by the teaching of the Holy Spirit of God. Conscience does not accuse you of this sin; society will not denounce you for this sin. It may denounce you for your drunkenness, or your avarice, or your dishonesty; but your conscience never smote you with the guilt of unbelief in Christ, nor will society, from any of its tribunals, pronounce a verdict of condemnation on a man because he does not believe in Christ. And if ever think it is a sin; and in your prayers and confessions at the throne of grace, how few feel, and how few acknowledge, that that one sin outweighs all sins in its turpitude, and that from that sin nothing but the blood of the Incarnate God can cleanse, and that nothing but the Omnipotence of the eternal Spirit can thoroughly and utterly eradicate it! "And when He is come, He will reprove the world of

sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment : of sin, because they believe not on Me."

You ask me—how this can be so heinous a sin. My dear friends, because in few words, it is just this ; it is rejecting the great remedy for all sin ; it is suspecting the love, doubting the mercy, disputing the sufficiency of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is not one sin, of which you that have heard the Gospel have been guilty in the past, let its flagrancy have been what it may, greater than this sin, which outweighs and outmeasures them all. It will be the condemning sin of a lost and ruined multitude. And why so ? Because by the sin of unbelief, you say that your sins are not so great that they need such blood to forgive them ; you practically say—' We will not only go before God amid the ruins of a broken law, but we will deliberately reject the only remedy that God has made for its removal.' You not only sin against the justice, which says, "Thou shalt not ;" but you sin against the love which bled and died for you ; it is a sin not only against law, which the Gospel tells you can be forgiven, but it is a sin against the Gospel, for which there is no future forgiveness ; it is not a sin merely against God as a judge, but it is a sin against God as a Saviour. And those persons approach more or less to the guilt of this sin, who have doubts whether Christ will have mercy on them that appeal to Him—who have suspicions lest his blood be not adequate to cleanse them—who think they are too sinful to go to Him—who fancy that He would thrust them away if they were to make the experiment. My dear friends, He "waits to be gracious ;" He stands for the purpose of receiving to His bosom, not little sinners or less sinners, but the greatest of sinners, the chiefest of sinners. And he is not the man that honours Christ, who stands aloof and says—"Oh ! I am too bad to go to Him ;" but he is the man that honours that Saviour, who rushes with the speed of the eagle's wing to His bosom, beseeching Him to forgive him by His precious blood, and to justify him by His glorious righteousness, and that "without money and without price"—without pledge or promise of any sort or description whatever.

Hence, the greatness of the sin of refusing to believe in Jesus. I solemnly believe that the great secret of all your mistakes and your standing aloof from the Gospel, is that you think of your sins as if they were greater than a Saviour's mercy, and that you think of Christ as a stiff and ceremonial taskmaster. There cannot be a greater mistake. If there be a single obstruction between the greatest sinner in this assembly and the bosom of God, what is that obstruction, and where is it ? It is not in God—it is in your hearts, and in them alone ; and your condemning sin at the judgment, if condemned, (which may God forbid !) will be this—not that your sins were too great to be forgiven, or that your character was too abandoned to be reclaimed, or that your ruin was too deep for recovery—but it will be this,—that you would not believe in Jesus and take Him as the remedy ; for "he that believeth shall be saved," while "he that believeth not shall be condemned." The Spirit, then, was to convince of sin, in not believing upon Jesus.

I have tried to explain this to you. I wish I could embody the ideas that are in my mind in the language that I would prefer. I wish I could convey this great truth to you more clearly, more vividly ; but supposing I had the power which humanity has not, it would be all as "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal," unless the Holy Spirit of God convince you of it. And now, my dear friends, may that Spirit convince you of it ! May He make you feel this ! May He lead you to know that you are welcome to the bosom of your blessed Saviour ; that the most holy of you need that blood, and the most guilty of you are not beyond its efficacy ! And may He so reveal to you the excellency of that Saviour, that you shall "count all things but loss, for the excellency of His knowledge !" And then your language would be, not—'How could I have been guilty of such folly ?' I could make you say that : but—'How could I have been guilty of such wickedness ?' That the Holy Spirit alone can enable you to say.

Perhaps some one asks, (and I trust some one may ask it)—"What is it to believe in Christ ?" My dear friends, it is the simplest thing in definition in the world. It is to feel that if God were to sink you to the very depths of irreversible, eternal, hopeless ruin, He would not inflict a punishment greater than your sins have deserved ; but, on the other hand, it is to feel that if, in the name and through the righteousness of Christ, He were to raise you to a glory too brilliant for mortal eye to look on, and too magnificent for the human

heart to conceive,—a glory in which angels live—inapproachable,—which no man hath seen,—God would not bestow upon you a greater boon than Christ's merits entitle you to.

II. But time, I trust, will still permit me to say a word or two upon the second division of the subject: when the Holy Spirit is come, "He will convince the world of righteousness."

He opens our ears, that we may hear the curse, but He does not stop there—He opens our ears, that we may hear the music of the blessing also. If that Spirit shows us the depth of our ruin, it is only that we may see from that depth the height of happiness to which that remedy can raise us. "He will convince the world of righteousness;" He will open our ears to hear the passions say—"We will sin," and to hear conscience protesting—"Do not sin;" and both amid the feebleness of the one and the force of the other, to hear One saying from the heights of the sky—"Sin shall not have dominion over you;" "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." And when the Spirit convinces of righteousness, it is not that Christ is simply a righteous man,—that would be no comfort to me—it would only precipitate me in the depth of despair, because of my utter impossibility of imitating Him; but when the Spirit convinces of His righteousness, He convinces us that Christ was also righteous for us. Justice demanded in His case the obedience of a man; Jesus rendered the obedience of a God; and hence our justifying righteousness is not a faint imitation of what Christ is, but it is an acceptance of what Christ has bequeathed to us—not a mere resemblance, but a great and blessed transference. Imitate what Christ is, and there is your model and the means of your holiness; but to be justified you must believe on and embrace by faith what Christ has done, and that alone, as your title and your righteousness in the sight of God. Just as Christ was condemned for my sin, so I am justified because of Christ's righteousness. My sin, imputed to Christ, made Him suffer, in virtue of an eternal law that connects sin with suffering; Christ's righteousness, imputed to me, makes me escape and be happy for ever. And as it was just in God to empty the vials of His wrath upon Christ, for sins that were not Christ's own, so it is but just in God to pour upon me the benedictions of His love, because of a righteousness which is not my righteousness, but Christ's made mine. And hence, then, my sin, laid upon the Saviour, explains the tragedy of the cross; His righteousness, laid upon me, explains the mystery of immortality and glory.

Thus, dear friends, we are each of us this day, in the sight of God and as far as our title to heaven is concerned, just what Christ is. The law says now, just as much as it ever said, that a perfect righteousness is alone our title to heaven. The law said to Adam, "Be perfectly righteous, and thou shalt have heaven;" and the law says to me, "Be perfectly righteous, and thou shalt have heaven." The law is the same. What has the Gospel done, then? In Adam's case he had personally to make good the righteousness; in my case Christ has done it for me.

It is thus, then, that the Spirit of God convinces us of righteousness; and if He take of these "things of Christ," according to promise, "and reveal them unto you," then you will leave this sanctuary happier than when you entered it, and you will have a happiness not like the world's happiness, but a happiness which the world cannot give, and which the world cannot take away.

III. But the Spirit will convince not only of sin and righteousness, but also "of judgment."

I have but just time to explain to you what is meant by judgment. It is this: the first promise made in Paradise was, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head;" the Spirit of God convinces His people that this process of bruising goes on—that the earth now, while under grace, is also partly under judgment, and that those things which the world cannot explain by what is called the law of nature, are the judgments of God. For instance, disease, decay, and death, the world calls the laws of nature: the Christian calls them the judgments of God. Death does not belong to nature; it is no part of nature; it is a disruption of nature; it is a violence done to nature; it is a discord amidst its pristine harmony; and to say that death is natural, is to say that God is untrue. The sharp winds of winter and the sere leaves of autumn are not natural; they are all unnatural. It is sin that withers

those leaves; it is sin that is the cause of all the head-aches and the heart-aches, the faintings and failings which our mortality is heir to. And therefore the Spirit of God will convince that they are not what philosophers call them, laws of nature, but they are what the Bible calls them, the judgments and decrees of God. None else will convince us savingly of this, but the Holy Spirit of God: "He shall convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."

Wherever, my dear friends, you see a Christian happy amid oppression, there you have an evidence that "the prince of this world is judged." "The prince of this world" once beat the Christians with rods, and they "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's name's sake." "The prince of this world" once imprisoned the Christians, and they sang praises so loud that the prison doors burst open, and they marched forth unshackled to the light of day. "The prince of this world" once beat a Christian and stoned him with stones, and that Christian looked up from his cruel sufferings, and from the midst of his cruel persecutors, and "saw Jesus at the right hand of God," and prayed for his murderers, and cried—"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." In all these instances "the prince of this world was judged." The holy, the just, the true, triumphed really, even when they did not triumph visibly. And is it not still becoming more and more true, that humility is dignity, and that holiness is strength? Is it not becoming every day more and more true, that the way to be ministered unto more abundantly, is to minister to others? And the time is coming more and more, I trust, when "the prince of this world," being "judged," shall be cast forth from the cabinets of queens and from the councils of statesmen—when he shall be cast out from the Parliament in England and the Congress of America—from the press and from the pulpit, from all men's hearts and from all men's homes—and the joy and holiness and happiness of God shall overflow the world, like a mighty and deepening river. Oh! that the Spirit of God may then convince us of this!

One remark, and I close. How different are the convictions of the Spirit of God from the convictions of the men of this world! The great effort of Voltaire was to convince the world that it had neither a Creator, nor a Father, nor a soul, nor a destiny beyond the brutes which perish; Rousseau tried to convince the world, that the gratification of all our sinful passions was the attainment of the highest happiness; and Byron, in strains of great witchery and music, tried to convince the world that profligacy was the perfection of enjoyment; and the Socialist tries to convince the world, that the unhinging of all its bonds and the disruption of its finest and its holiest connections, must be its greatest happiness; and a school has arisen—the school of Emerson and (I fear I must add) Carlyle—the disciples of which are labouring to prove, with language of awful eloquence and power, and profound thought, that earnestness of purpose and energy of heart constitute true and lasting happiness. In the writings of Carlyle, and those associated with him, there is much that is good and useful; and if he has done nothing more, he has at least done good in what he calls "scattering the shams" of the world, exposing the hypocrisies of the world, in whatever way they may manifest themselves. But still with the good there is mingled much that is bad. When the Spirit of God, however, convinces the world, he takes a different course. He convinces of sin, that you may lie prostrate before God; He convinces of righteousness, that you may seek a title to the skies; and He convinces of judgment, that all the evil may be banished from the world, and all the good remain.

And how different does the Spirit begin His work, from the way in which man begins His work! Man's work begins on the outside, and proceeds inwards; the Spirit's work begins in the inside, and moves outwards. Man is satisfied with giving the exterior polish; the Spirit gives the interior life. Man supplies graces for gratifying men's eyes: the Spirit gives life from within, to originate the graces without. Man studies to seem; the Spirit makes us to be. The former is the sham, the latter is the reality. The church makes churchmen; dissent makes dissenters; but the Spirit of God makes Christians.



## THE NEW CREATURE.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. HENRY CHRISTMAS, M.A., F.R.S., F.S.A..

PREACHED IN VERULAM EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, LAMBETH,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 31, 1847.

*"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*—2 Corinthians v. 17.

THAT newness of aspect, under which the Christian views the world and its inhabitants, himself, his state and future condition, his enjoyments here, and his anticipations hereafter, is the most remarkable feature of the new life on which he has entered. Scattered thickly throughout the volume of Holy Writ, are passages which mark, in the strongest manner, the contrast between the unbeliever and the man whose heart is renewed. *He* sees what the other perceives not; faith to his eye is the telescope which brings another world beneath his observation, and shows him not only its reality but its glories. "Behold, all things are become new!"

These words imply a mighty change; and let us, while we endeavour to trace its progress and to ascertain its nature, lift up our hearts to the throne of Divine grace, that our minds may be illuminated and our affections hallowed, that this vital change may pass upon all of us, and that we may be of the same spirit as was Christ our Lord.

It is not from without that this change takes place; for God "causeth His sun to shine upon the good and the evil, and maketh His rain to fall on the just and the unjust." It is not in heaven above, or in the earth beneath; for still "day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge;" far less is it in that great Being himself, with whom is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The change is not from without, but in man himself,—a change of thought, a change of hope, a change of nature. From the time that he enters into the mystical body of Christ, he acquires a new sense; the scales fall from his eyes, and he beholds things which were not visible before, because they are "spiritually discerned." Like the prophet's servant, who, when his eyes were miraculously opened, saw the mountain filled with horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha, so the newly-born Christian sees the sure tendency of good and of evil, of sin and of righteousness. His sight is purged as with euphrasy and rue; and though he may have been long seeking after the vanities of this world, he is enabled to burst all the bands of prejudice and education, and to estimate all things at their true value. The worldly man may know theoretically, as well as the Christian, the truths of religion; he may assent to the proposition, that "without holiness, none can see the Lord;" he may say that he trusts to attain a blessed eternity; but does he feel that of which he speaks—does it even in the smallest degree affect his conduct? I trow not. In fact, (and a melancholy fact it is,) he is totally indifferent about the matter. The God of this world has blinded his eyes to the dread realities of a future state. The world, and the things of the world are vividly present to his mind; but of another, he knows nothing, feels nothing, thinks nothing. Yet if, while thus employed in heaping up riches for this frail and transient life, in enjoying those pleasures which last but for a moment and yield no solid satisfaction, the Spirit of God should "strive" mightily with that man; if, drawn by the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, he should come unto the Father, and be received as he who with a humble and contrite heart cometh to the Father ever will be,—then the veil which had hitherto covered the real aspect of things, will be drawn up before his eyes, and he will behold the prospect of the future lighted up by the rays

of eternal truth. And oh ! if there be newness in freedom to the born-slave ; if there be newness in light to the man who has for years been the tenant of a dungeon ; then may this man cry out, in the fulness of his joy—" Old things are passed away ; and behold, all things are become new."

There is something so striking in the Gospel scheme, something so beautifully fitted to its great design, that were we not aware of that moral and mental blindness which hangs over the world like a cloud, we should suppose that it must carry conviction to every breast, that its demands would meet with immediate and universal compliance. It is, however, a consideration not the less awful, because forced on our notice by the occurrences of every day, that "*strait* is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and *few* there be that go in thereat." Alas ! we might go into some temple dedicated to God's worship ; and among the crowds who there bow the knee, if we singled out any person at random, how probable is it that we might say—" This man has passed his years hitherto " without God in the world ;" he may consider himself " rich and increased in goods, and having need of nothing," and he may deem himself good and wise, and perchance religious also ; he may have attended on the means of grace, and associated with the people of God ; but he is still " in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Suppose, then, that it pleased God " by the foolishness of preaching" to open that man's heart to the truth ; mark then the change that follows. He listens to the history of the Saviour ; watches His agony in the garden ; and attends Him to the cross. He hears the shouts of the fierce Romans, and the insults of the Jewish rabble. He hearkens to the prayer of the Saviour for forgiveness on His murderers ; and that cry strikes on his ear at which " the veil of the temple was rent,"—" It is finished !" The darkness that fell over earth and heaven is palpable before him ; and the throne of hell is shaken to its foundations by the earthquake that followed. He has heard this a thousand times before ; but never till now did he know what it meant. Now with the Word the dew of the Spirit sinks into his heart ; tears break from his eyes, long unused to such streams ; he identifies his own sins among those, to expiate which God himself so suffered, and he exclaims—" Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." Nor does the revelation thus made to his soul stop here ; he becomes aware how utterly inconceivable is the value of that which required the sacrifice of Christ to redeem ; how awful must be the punishment, to avert which so costly an atonement was necessary ! The world is now in his mind but as the place of his probation, in which " with fear and trembling," he is to " work out his salvation." Its glories and its honours, its pleasures and its splendours, the gold and the gems and the laurel, and those still more intoxicating scenes that passion can conjure up, pass before him as the gorgeous pageantry of crowns and kingdoms passed before the Saviour during His temptation ; he hears the voice that exclaims—" All these will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me : " and he recollects the Divine answer—" It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." The men of this world see the splendid phantoms, and are allured by their beauty ; the man who is enlightened by the Divine Spirit sees also their emptiness, and the fiendish hand that offers them. Great, however, as is the change which affects earthly and future objects of desire in his estimation, it is still less wonderful than the alteration in his moral perception that now takes place. The light that has dawned upon his soul shows him the awful and ineffable majesty of that God who " chargeth his angels with folly," and " in whose sight the heavens themselves are not pure." It reveals the distance at which the highest and holiest of created beings stand from Him who made them so ; and he feels that while angels and archangels veil their faces with awe and reverence in the presence of the All Holy One, it surely becomes man, the fallen, the earthly, to prostrate himself in speechless worship before God, and to rejoice with lowly adoration, that from His remote station even he may join in the praises of his Maker. But if he thus feels the greatness of the Deity, and is so deeply sensible of " the exceeding sinfulness of sin," with what feelings will he contemplate the mercy that is held out for his acceptance ! That the Lord of life and glory should so far condescend in mercy as to pardon the wickedness and corruptions of a world in which " there is none that doeth good, no, not one," is itself far more than the unaided mind of man could conceive ; that he should not only pardon His rebellious creatures, but offer in His own presence an eternity of unutterable felicity, is an

extent of goodness to which the wildest imagination could never attain; but when we know, that to secure this happiness for us, He descended in one person of His triune divinity to a world of sin and suffering, that He was "despised and rejected of men," that He "came unto His own, and His own received Him not," that finally He suffered death for our sins, and that through the merits of His death we are invited to come unto God,—I say, in contemplating a love so infinite, language sinks beneath the vast conception, and adoring silence is the only homage that man can render to the Eternal. These topics are taught us from our childhood; we are aware of their truth; but we neither feel their importance, nor perceive their magnificence. We are like a man placed in a hall lined with the most exquisite paintings, and adorned with priceless and unrivalled statues; but either that hall is wrapped in impenetrable darkness, or the eyes of the man are so bound that he cannot see. It is in vain that you tell him of the glories by which he is surrounded; he may be convinced that you speak truth,—nay, he may himself assert that he is surrounded by all the triumphs of art; but what though his mind be thus convinced?—his thoughts are not upon them; there is no light to reflect back the splendours of the picture, to reveal the almost breathing beauty of the statue. But let a flood of day burst upon the scene, let the eye before vacant be filled with the choicest objects; and that man will start (as it were) from a trance, and realise at once that to which before he only assented. So when the Spirit has removed the bandage from the intellectual eye, and thawed the icy fetters that held back the heart's most valuable feelings, then, endowed at once with sight and liberty, can the Christian exclaim with delight—"Old things are passed away; and behold, all things are become new."

We might prove, were it necessary, that he only who has awaked from his sleep, who has "arisen from the dead," (that is, from the death of sin,) can worship the Creator "in spirit and in truth;" for he only knows what kind of Being is the God whom he adores. In the vision of realising faith, the clouds disperse, the shadows fly, the country beyond the grave is made like Canaan beneath the eye of Moses; but the believer knows that he shall enter in, and abundantly possess it. And, think you, while he looks upon that holy city, "the New Jerusalem," that sunless, moonless, starless abode, lighted by the lustre of the everlasting throne—while the songs of her glorified inhabitants, the harpings of her seraphic minstrelsy, strike from afar upon his ear—that these things are chief in refreshing his spirit, and urging him onwards with invigorated resolution? He is holden up by the knowledge that Christ, his Head, his Leader, "the Captain of his salvation," is gone before, and that there he "shall be like Him, for he shall see Him as He is." But if he turn his eyes another way, he beholds a picture equally impressive, but awfully different. He beholds the gate at which Hope forsakes whosoever enters; he hears from within the voice of "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth;" he sees "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched;" and he beholds that "the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever;" but he knows that this vast storehouse of Divine wrath, filled as it with plagues and everlasting fire, is prepared not for Him, but for "the devil and His angels." He beholds the arm of One "mighty to save," outstretched to prevent his falling into the fiery gulf: and thus he sees, in the mirror of faith, the penalty if he "neglect," the reward if he embrace, "this great salvation." This he could not do till the Spirit of God enlightened him; for these are things to be "spiritually discerned," and unless they are seen they cannot be obtained. Faith we have already compared to a telescope, which brings under our notice the beauties of a far-off land; but the telescope leaves us as far as we were. Faith, on the other hand, not only shows us the heavenly inheritance of Christ's faithful followers, but it gives us a title to partake of its advantages. And who, with the immediate prospect of a kingdom to which all the mightiest empires of the earth are as less than nothing, would be over-particular as to how he fared during the few days before taking possession? To the man of the world, all beyond death is a dreary void: to the Christian, it is the assurance of glory; and he who is thus changed may well exclaim—"Old things are passed away; and behold, all things are become new."

But it is not only that "whereas he was blind before, now he sees"—that the eyes of his mind have been anointed, and the effectual "Epiphatha" has been pronounced by Him who never spake in vain; his moral nature has also received a change,—the tides of feeling have been restored to their right

channel, and now flow on calmly and swiftly towards their Creator, like deep rivers that roll mightily towards the ocean in which they are finally absorbed. Gratitude to the Divine Author of his being, from whom come all blessings, is now for the first time felt; love to the Divine Saviour, by whom he has been rescued from "the wrath to come," is now a part of his character; no longer does he struggle against the pleading Spirit of the Most High, but having beheld with a clear eye, he acts according to the dictates of a heart no longer under a spell, and his language becomes—"What shall I render unto the Lord, for all His benefits to me?" The question cannot remain unanswered; the Scripture suggests the reply: "My son, give Me thy heart;" and in obedience to the sacred precept, he lays his heart on the altar of the Lord, and devotes himself unreservedly to God. The unregenerate man no more feels the monstrous ingratitude, the ineffable wickedness of his best estate, than he sees in their true colours the nature and the consequences of sin. Seeing and feeling thus differently, "the yoke" of the Saviour will be found "easy, and His burden light." "Dost thou believe?" says the Saviour; "thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble." But man, alas! for the most part, believes without trembling. The only true principle of obedience is love; and obedience is the only true test of love. Our Divine Master has said—"If ye love Me, keep My commandments;" and truly, unless we do love Him, we cannot keep His commandments. The duties of the Christian course are not to be performed by one who does not enjoy the Christian's support; they are not only distasteful, but they are impossible. By the assistance of the Divine Spirit, however, we are enabled to perform what is required of us; we are first enabled to see, we are then induced to feel, we are next assisted to act; and in these three operations consists the change by which the man "who is in Christ becomes a new creature." He goes with alacrity about duties which he formerly neglected, or felt to be a burden; the service of God's house is a delightful service for him; he attends to hear what the Lord will say unto him by His servant, to join in praising his Creator, to bend his knee in prayer before his Preserver. He is willing to "forgive men their trespasses;" for it is ever present to his mind how great offences has God forgiven him. He submits meekly to the injuries with which he meets; for he remembers that Christ his Lord was mocked and scourged, insulted and crucified; and he prays for his persecutors, bearing in mind that even on the cross his Divine Master offered up a prayer for those whose hands were yet red with His sacred blood. Of his wealth he freely distributes to those that have need,—for he considers himself as one that will have to "give an account of his stewardship;" he pays "honour where honour is due, tribute to whom tribute;" he does not speak evil of the ruler of His people, for he knows that "the powers that be are ordained of God." In the domestic relations of life, he reflects (as it were,) the love of God around him; and by the study of that inspired Book, which alone "maketh wise unto salvation," he is "thoroughly furnished to every good word and work." Is this the character of one as yet unrenewed? Far from it. The ordinances of God he regards not; the example of Christ he follows not; the Scriptures of truth he obeys not; his wealth is lavished upon vanity, if not crime; and if he is amiable in his domestic character, it is attributable only to mere good-nature. Nay, perchance, he may be the very reverse; he may be morose, as well as careless; stained with crime, as well as neglectful of God. Neglect of God is itself a crime, and one quite sufficient to ruin any soul; but I here speak of crime of a more tangible description; he may be a blasphemer, a drunkard, an adulterer; he may be given up to "work all uncleanness with greediness;" but even if this be the case, the blood of the new covenant has not lost its saving efficacy. And when such an one becomes the character that I just before described, all within the sphere of his influence will say—"This man is "a new creature;" with him "old things are passed away; and behold, all things are become new."

Here, then, was a case of guilt, dark and desperate; the "roaring lion," who "goeth about to seek whom he may devour," was about to take a last spring, when the Divine power interposed, and saved the intended victim. And beholding such a case of moral peril perchance, I may say, while I look round the walls of this sacred building—"And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are purified, but ye are sanctified." And may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, keep you from falling, and guide you into all peace.

Lastly, if so great and so important be the change which takes place on all who enter the mystical body of Christ; we are enabled, by applying to ourselves the test, to decide that question upon which our happiness here and hereafter depends. Are we in Christ? Are we new creatures? It matters not how we seem to others, what the religious world may think of us, for unless we are "renewed in the spirit of our minds," we shall be like the patient who conceals his disease from the physician, the client who gives an unfair statement of his case to the advocate. I know that nothing can be concealed from God; but we may blind our own consciences, or partially do so. At all events, we may strive to do so; we may say to our souls—"Peace, peace, when there is no peace;" and thus we may keep up a hollow quiet, even as the ruined man may calm his feelings by forbearing to examine his accounts. But this question must be asked, and must be met fairly and fully; and if not here, it will have a fearful answer in eternity. Let us, then, examine ourselves whether we "truly repent of our former sins, and stedfastly purpose to lead a new life, having a living faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death." If so, and we are "in charity with all men," we may conclude that this change has passed upon us. And we may with humble confidence look forward to that day, when literally as well as spiritually, "Old things shall pass away;" "a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" shall greet our sight; and, entering upon a course of celestial happiness, we shall exclaim—"Behold, all things are become new!"

## THE CONNEXION BETWEEN NATURAL PHILOSOPHY AND REVEALED RELIGION.

The following is the Syllabus of a Course of Lectures on the Connexion between Natural Philosophy and Revealed Religion, to be delivered in Verulam Episcopal Chapel, Lambeth, before the Members of the Church of England Young Men's Society, (South West London Auxiliary,) by the Rev. HENRY CHRISTMAS, M.A., F.R.S., F.S.A., *Acad. Reg. Matrit. Ant. Soc., Librarian of Sion College, and Minister of the Chapel* :—

### LECTURE I.

*Wednesday Evening, November 24th, 1847.*

#### ASTRONOMY :

The Cosmogony of Moses—Light created before the Sun—Solar System—the Moon and her offices—Progressive Character of Creation—Analogy between the Visible and Spiritual Universe.

### LECTURE II.

*Wednesday Evening, December 1st, 1847.*

#### ASTRONOMY CONTINUED.

Plurality of Worlds—Discoveries of Modern Astronomers—their Tendency—the Miracle of Joshua—the Sun stayed at the Command of Isaiah—Worship of the Heavenly Bodies—their Origin, Nature, and Effects. Conclusion.

### LECTURE III.

*Wednesday Evening, December 8th, 1847.*

#### LIGHT :

Its Velocity—Reflections on its Transmission—Argument for the Divine Omniscience—Light Emblematic of Truth—its Identity or Intimate Connexion with Caloric, Electricity and Galvanism, and Magnetism, shown by recent experiments—Tendency of such doctrines—Aurora Borealis. Conclusion.

### LECTURE IV.

*Wednesday Evening, December 15th, 1847.*

#### GEOLOGY :

The System of Moses—How far coincident with Modern Discoveries—Scripture Chronology considered—Hindoo Chronology—Egyptian Chronology—Chinese Chronology—The Question of Inspiration considered—the Object of Moses—Geology yet in its Infancy.

### LECTURE V.

*Wednesday Evening, December 22nd, 1847.*

#### NATURAL HISTORY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD :

Natural History of Moses—the Trees of Life and of Knowledge—Leviathan—Behemoth—the Serpent of Paradise—the Winged Serpents of the Desert—Jewish Traditions. Conclusion.

### LECTURE VI.

*Wednesday Evening, December 29th, 1847.*

#### OBJECTS AND ADVANTAGES OF SCIENCE :

The Improvement of the Mind a Religious Duty—shown to bear on Missionary Enterprise—Value of Mathematical Research to the Ministers of the Church, and especially to the Missionary. Conclusion.

The above Lectures will appear in early Numbers of *The Pulpit*, commencing on Thursday next, December 2.

UPRIGHT WALKING, THE CONDITION OF PROFITING  
BY THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD.

A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. ROBERT BICKERSTETH, B.A.

PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, CLAPHAM RISE,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 21, 1847.

*"Do not My words do good to him that walketh uprightly?"—Micah ii. 7.*

It is a common and a just observation, that the greatest blessings when perverted become the greatest curses. An unimproved or an abused privilege becomes a positive evil; that which was designed to benefit, will through its wrong use turn only to mischief; and then the greater the benefit which it was intended to confer, the more terrible will be the injury of which it is actually productive.

It were easy to adduce a host of illustrations to confirm the justice of these observations. There is hardly a temporal blessing to be named, in respect of which it may not be shewn that its abuse becomes a curse to the possessor. The larger the measure of its bestowment, the more fearful is the evil resulting from its misuse. To take only one or two illustrations out of many which might readily be named: look, for example, at the endowments of intellect or of reason. There can be no question that God confers a great blessing upon a man, when He endows him with a fine and comprehensive understanding. The intellect is a noble faculty; it serves immeasurably to elevate and to dignify its possessor; it bespeaks the gloriousness of his origin, and the magnificence of his destiny; and wheresoever you meet an individual gifted with extraordinary powers of mind, it is impossible to withhold some tribute of admiration. There may indeed be found some, with either not sufficient understanding themselves to appreciate mental ability, or with too much selfishness to allow of their praising in another what betokens inferiority in themselves; but these are the exceptions; men will commonly pay homage to genius, and acknowledge the splendour of the gift wherever it is met with. And yet this talent, so admirable—this faculty, so noble—may prove anything rather than a blessing to its owner; it may become, through perversion or abuse, an injury in place of a blessing; and the injury will be proportional to the magnitude of the gift. Yes, if the man to whom God has allotted a more than common grasp of intellect should grow vain of the gift—if he should come to act independently of the Giver—if, exulting in the pride of intellect, he should scorn to submit himself to revelation—if, in the high soarings of reason, he should be dazzled by the splendour of her discoveries, and close his vision to those truths which reason by herself is unequal to apprehend,—then will the loftiness of his endowment in this respect prepare the way for only a more aggravated ruin, and reason, in place of guiding him up to an acquaintance with God, may only serve to shed a melancholy brilliance on the path which leads to perdition. The blessing will in this case be converted into a curse, and the immensity of the ruin will be measured by the vastness and the nobleness of the perverted endowment. Or, to borrow another illustration from the case of him to whose lot Providence has ordained a more than common abundance of this world's wealth: riches honestly obtained are designed for a blessing. Be it that God intends to prove men by prosperity, even as in another mode He proves by adversity, yet even under this point of view wealth may be considered a blessing. The trial successfully passed will issue in the advantage of its subject. And beside this, opulence affords to its possessor extended means of usefulness—larger facilities for advancing the Divine glory. It is represented in Scripture as a blessing; and there can be no question that when God confers power

to get wealth, He confers a good for which He is fitly entitled to praise. It is easy, however, to perceive that wealth, like every other temporal blessing, is capable of the greatest abuse. It may—it often has—become a curse to its possessor. If, in place of viewing prosperity as God's gift, an individual comes to connect it only with human foresight or skill—if the possession minister to pride, self-confidence and selfishness—if it make him heedless of the necessities of others, and intent solely upon his own aggrandizement,—then it is not difficult to see, that affluence which was designed for good, is in this case working only evil to the possessor; and here too the extent of mischief will be proportional to the amount of blessing abused. To say nothing of that positive evil which wealth and the power which it confers may enable a man to commit, there will be injury to himself which will be proportioned to the resources at his command. Each new accession of wealth will tend to make him more heedless of his dependence upon God—will minister to the growth of that haughtiness of temper which precedes a fall, and to that selfishness of spirit which when it once takes possession of a heart commonly makes it impervious to all impression for good. Thus in this case the blessing will have been transformed into a curse—or, to borrow the language of Scripture, the thing which should have been for the man's welfare has become to him “an occasion of falling.”

It is unnecessary to pursue further this train of observation. Enough has been said in confirmation of the point, that an abused blessing works only injury to its possessor. The moral lesson we have derived from the two instances of a misapplied reason and of a misused abundance might with equal propriety be derived from every instance in which a blessing is not used conformably to the design of God in its allotment. The cases to which we have referred are those of temporal blessings; but spiritual mercies may equally be abused with temporal, and the result which ensues from their misuse is to the full as disastrous. This truth is at least implied in that emphatic question which we have proposed as a topic for meditation this evening. The prophet, speaking in the name of God, demands—“Do not My words do good to him that walketh uprightly?” But the form of interrogation clearly implies, that to such as walk not in uprightness the words of the Almighty will rather do injury.

With reference to the occasion upon which the question was first put, it may be enough to observe, that Micah who proposed it was a prophet of the Lord who flourished at a period when gross corruption prevailed amongst Israel and Judah. He was called upon to remonstrate with the people for their degeneracy and crime, and he had also to foretel the approach of calamity severe as it was merited. It is scarcely to be wondered at that this preaching was unacceptable to the people whose conduct it served to upbraid. They endeavoured to silence him from speaking, being desirous only to be left alone in their practice of iniquity. The prophet's voice served to startle and to disquiet them; they looked upon him simply as a messenger of evil, and as the instrument in some sense of the apprehended calamities. Accordingly, they surrounded him in the execution of his office, and urged him to desist from the proclamation of woe. And it was in reply to the solicitations of those who entreated of him not to prophecy, that he delivered that emphatic appeal which you have in the verse containing our text: “O thou,” said he, “that art named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these His doings?” And then he added further—“Do not My words do good to him that walketh uprightly?” As if he had said—“Though I breathe a message of woe, and though I have to foretel impending judgments, yet it is in mercy the warning is given. This very announcement of wrath shall “do good” to those who will turn and “walk uprightly;” they shall be able to attest, that “My words do good to him that walketh uprightly.”

Our concern, however, at present is not so much with the occasion upon which the challenge of the text was delivered, as with the broad principle which it seems to imply. There is pointed out, in the question before us, the condition of all profitable hearing of God's words. God's words do good to them that walk uprightly. Upright walking is, then, the requisite condition for being advantaged by the reception of Divine truth; in other words, the precept must be embodied in practice, or it will not only be useless, it will be positively injurious. This is the great truth that by God's help we would endeavour to bring before you to-night. We wish to examine how far it is susceptible of proof, that in order to be morally advantaged by the hearing of God's words, there must be diligence in the hearer to walk uprightly. And there are two methods

in which we will aim to make good this point : the first is by shewing what reason there is to expect that a man who hears God's words, but walks not uprightly, will only be injured by the communication ; and the second is by showing somewhat of that good which may be expected to follow from the hearing of God's words to one who walks uprightly. This will constitute a kind of negative and positive proof of the truth implied in the question—"Do not My words do good to him that walketh uprightly?"

I. We are to show, then, in the first place, what reasons there are for expecting that the hearing of God's words will injure, rather than benefit, the individual who walks not "uprightly."

Now it is evident that some qualification is necessary at the outset, to obviate an erroneous conclusion which might be drawn from the foregoing statement. When it is affirmed that God's words do not benefit those who walk not uprightly, it might be objected, 'What, then, becomes of the utility of the proclamation to the disobedient? and what remains of the office of the Word to convince and to convert the soul?' We know that Scripture by itself, and the preaching of the Gospel, are amongst the agencies which God employs for the bringing home to men's minds the conviction of sin, and for leading them to an acquaintance with the mode of salvation. If, then, it is affirmed that God's words "do good" to those only who "walk uprightly," this representation, at least, appears to clash with such statements as attribute to God's Word a powerful efficacy to convince and convert the backslider. The apparent contradiction is, however, easily explained. The prophet is clearly speaking of such persons as under the hearing of God's words refused to repent and be obedient. The message he had to deliver was calculated to reclaim and convert them, but they refused submission to the authority of Him in whose name the messenger spake; and it was in this case that the tidings injured, in place of benefitting. The guilt and the responsibility were all their own; the fault was not in the Word. Neither was the prophet to desist from proclaiming that Word, simply because when its statements were rejected moral injury would result; the Word was adapted to cause lasting benefit, it was designed for a blessing, and if it in reality became instrumental only to injury, the responsibility of this entirely belonged to those by whom the design of God was wilfully frustrated. And so with reference to the proclamation of God's truth amongst ourselves: we are not to be deterred from communicating God's words to the disobedient, simply because there is a possibility that they will continue the disobedient, and in that case be injured, and not advantaged, by the message. Those words are adapted to convince them of the folly and the guilt of impenitence; provided only they obtain hearing and acquiescence, they will assuredly do good; and we are to act upon this possibility—throwing the entire responsibility of any injury which may accrue, upon the individual who by wilful rejection of God's words—in other words, by refusal to "walk uprightly"—frustrates the intention of those words to cause him good.

With this qualification, we may now proceed to investigate more closely the reasons wherefore the proclamation of God's words shall injure those who walk not "uprightly." You will keep in view the case which we are supposing: it is that of an individual to whom God's words are sent—it matters not whether simply on the page of the Bible, or through the instrumentality of preaching. This individual has gained some degree of familiarity with the message of God's truth; he is no stranger to the tenour of that communication which God has made to us of His will in the volume of Revelation; he is far from being ignorant of the nature of those promises or threatenings which God has revealed in His Word; but the acquaintance has never yet led him to a walk of uprightness; he has never yet come to the recognition of God's authority to command, nor of God's claim to the consecration of His every faculty. God's words have been practically a dead letter; promise has not allured him to obey, even threatening has not scared him from rebellion; he has withstood all the overtures of mercy and all the denunciations of wrath; God's words, whether inscribed on the page of Scripture or communicated audibly by the ministrations of the Gospel, have never yet led him to "walk uprightly." And this is precisely the case in which we are prepared to contend, that the words of God are turning to that man's injury. It is not simply that he has been unadvantaged by their proclamation; it is that he is



morally injured—that the blessing is being converted into a curse—and because he walks not “uprightly,” therefore God’s Word is not doing him “good.”

You will ask my reason for concluding thus : wherefore do we maintain in respect of an individual who is familiarised to appeals from Scripture—that is, to the sound of God’s Word—but who is not influenced thereby to set out upon a walk of uprightness, that he is morally injured, rather than benefitted, by the proclamation ? Indeed we need not search far for reasons to justify this conclusion. We assume (what, indeed, all must admit) that every man’s real and highest enjoyment, his greatest moral advantage, depends upon his conformity to the precepts of God’s Word. There will not, I conceive, be a difference of opinion upon this point—that the sum of a creature’s happiness must depend upon the agreement between his course of conduct and the precepts of God’s Word ; in short, that he must, sooner or later, hearken to and obey the will of his Maker, or he will suffer irretrievable loss and shame. And now the question is, whether each instance in which God’s words are heard, and no result towards holiness produced, does not diminish the probability of ultimate obedience ; whether, in short, the longer an individual goes on in a state of indifference to piety under the ministration of God’s Word, he is not becoming morally more hard and inflexible, less likely ever to become the subject of genuine repentance. Now it seems to be a law of man’s moral constitution, that feelings once aroused, which are not carried out into practice, gradually become feebler, and less capable of being awakened afresh. If you have succeeded at any time in awakening within the mind of another a strong feeling, and if that feeling subside without generating a corresponding course of conduct, it will be a ten times harder matter to produce that feeling again. We apply this observation to the case of a hearer of God’s words. We know that the tidings which those words convey are preeminently adapted to arouse the feelings or sensibilities of man’s nature ; they are addressed to the hopes and the fears which are seated deep within the breast of every one. What can be more stirring than the appeal which God’s words address to the fears ? what more animating than their appeal to the hopes of mankind ? And we cannot suppose it possible that a man should have been long plied with the ministrations of the Gospel, that he should have been long familiarised to the messages of Scripture, without having had his moral sensibilities at some time aroused. He has kindled with fear or throbbled with hope. Now what we maintain is just this—that if these feelings, thus appealed to and thus awakened, have evaporated without resulting in moral action, the individual has sustained a vast moral injury. According to the principle to which we just now adverted, he must have become less sensitive, less capable of moral impression, and less pervious to moral appeal ; and we can only, therefore, describe the process through which every man is passing who is living beneath the constant hearing of God’s words without being influenced by them to “walk uprightly,” as a process of moral hardening. Why, every text as it recurs to memory, every page of Scripture upon which the eye turns, every sermon which is hearkened to, is a fresh appeal, whether to hope or to fear. It is like a new assault made upon the moral sensibilities ; and we know very well that if these awakened hopes or fears lead not to a decisive course of action, the individual must be morally injured. He will under each new proclamation of God’s words become less sensitive to the force of their testimony, more indifferent to what they demand ; and thus becoming morally harder, he must be positively injured by the proclamation. And, therefore, if I wanted an illustration in proof of what is affirmed in the question of the text, oh ! it should be enough to make mention of the case of one who, when he first listened to the proclamation of Divine truth, throbbled with the forebodings of fear, or the aspirations of hope. But, alas ! these feelings subsided without producing any active result : when he next hearkened to the tidings, the message, though eloquent as before of God’s love to the fallen, and breathing as before the same tidings of pardon for all who will repent, but of bitter condemnation for the unbelieving and obdurate, was heard with far less of emotion. In his subsequent career, he has gradually acquired that pitch of moral insensibility, which leaves him almost wholly unmoved beneath the most stirring appeal which is borrowed from the mercies or the terrors of the Lord ; and now as you behold him arrived at that most unenviable state, in which he can hearken to all that is melting in the Gospel and all that is terrible without being affected by the communication, will you not infer, that through his refusal to walk uprightly

he has proved that the condition for deriving benefit from the words of God must be that which is implied by the question—"Do not My words do good, to him that walketh uprightly?"

Now it will at once occur to you that, in a representation like the foregoing, we are fully borne out by the statements of Scripture. An inspired apostle, when speaking of the office which he discharged as a minister of the Gospel, declares, "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish; to the one we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life." It is there implied, that the ministry of the Gospel actually contributes to the condemnation of those by whom it is rejected. It does so, not only by vindicating, as it hereafter will, the justice of their final punishment; but it does so, even now, by positively hardening those whom it does not convert. When a man successfully withstands the most powerful means that can be brought to bear for his moral conversion, it is unreasonable to expect that inferior means should prove effectual. We do not deny the possibility of such a case; God, in whose hand entirely rests the conversion of the sinner, may be pleased to command success to an inferior agency; and the case has sometimes occurred, in which an individual on whom the ministrations of the Gospel have been apparently expended in vain, have been subdued and converted by some casual occurrence, or some providential dispensation. In that instance, the lower or weaker instrumentality has prevailed, when the higher and more powerful served to fail. But this is an exception to the ordinary rule, and generally speaking we affirm, that when the appointed means of grace have proved ineffectual to produce conversion, you have no warrant to expect that other means will succeed. There is no case in which there is greater cause for apprehension than that of an individual who has long been accustomed to the ministrations of the Gospel, without being converted beneath them. It seems, in a case like this, that the avenues through which the heart and conscience are commonly reached have been closed; long familiarity with the syllables of warning or of invitation, unfollowed by any practical effort of obedience, has only served to render the individual less open to conversion. And, indeed, this consideration ought to be laid to heart by each one amongst us, in respect of whom it might be affirmed, that he walks not uprightly, according to the requirements of the Gospel. The painful reflection is, that each warning, each invitation that you hear, each overture of mercy that is pressed upon your notice, to which you render not obedience, actually leaves you less likely to be profited by any future appeal. It may be, that as God's words are now sounding in your ears; as you are being this night appealed to on the testimony of Scripture; as I were to array before you your lost and ruined condition by nature; as I went on to describe the love of God in having redeemed you with the precious blood of Christ; as I were to make mention of that Divine agency whereby you may be qualified to forsake sin and to pursue after holiness; as I went on to speak of the ruin that awaits the transgressor, or discoursed of that blessedness which is offered to all who will follow the Saviour, my words might fall with some power on the conscience of here and there one in this gathered assembly. The Spirit of the everliving God, who is always present with the ministrations of the Gospel, might employ the truths I deliver at this season, to break in some heart the slumber of sin; to cause a thrill of hope, or a pang of fear. Now what I affirm in respect of such a case, is briefly this—that if the newly awakened feeling be stifled; if it be not cherished; if you seek not to carry it out into action; if it lead not to some vigorous and prompt effort to walk in the way of uprightness—then will you have sustained a moral injury. The momentary disturbance, which is not succeeded by the new life of righteousness, will leave you more fixedly the impenitent than before; and the probability is, that the next appeal to which you shall hearken, though sanctioned by precisely the same truths, will be heard with comparative indifference. The present resistance offered will make future resistances more easy; and thus the preaching of the Gospel, with all about it that breathes of love and of mercy, will actually be subservient to your increased hardness and infidelity, till growing daily more ripe for destruction there will be presented by the very contrast in your case to that of others who walk according to the Divine precepts, a witness in support of the saying—"Do not My words do good to him that walketh uprightly?"

II. We turn, however, at this point to a far more cheering topic than the

foregoing ; we are to consider, secondly, the positive good which results to the upright from hearing God's words. If the acquaintance with Divine Truth which is unaccompanied by consistent walking contributes to moral injury, beyond all doubt that same knowledge, if connected with obedience, ministers to the moral welfare of the hearer. Under what point of view, then, does it appear that God's words actually benefit those who walk uprightly ? We think there are several modes in which this benefit may be derived.

In the first place, look at the knowledge which revelation imparts. Now there is not a single portion of knowledge most necessary for man to be acquainted with, which is not to be found on the page of God's Word. You have only to think how it affords instruction with respect to God himself—with respect to man, both as to his origin and destiny. It reveals to us the moral character of Jehovah ; it sets before us the Almighty as a God of truth and equity—of faithfulness, compassion and love ; it unfolds to us the several attributes of our Maker—His uncompromising justice, His unswerving truth, and yet His exuberant tenderness and pity ; it opens out the gracious plan of human redemption—the wisdom and mercy which combined for the repair of that ruin which sin merited. It tells us how man was at first created after the Divine image, endowed with every moral excellence, and fitted by the purity and perfection of his being for the highest enjoyment whereof a creature is susceptible ; it explains how this was forfeited by the fall, and it thus accounts for the presence of evil, and of all those innumerable troubles which fall to the lot of mankind in their present estate. But it does not stop short with the account of man's ruin—it goes on to describe the several steps that lead to his restoration : the Divinely conceived method of his recovery, by the death of the Incarnate Word, and of his moral renovation through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. It speaks, further, of the terms upon which forgiveness is offered to man ; it shews us that the redemption provided in the Gospel is commensurate with the evil it is intended to remedy ; it offers to every descendant of Adam, of whatever nation under heaven, a free forgiveness and a title to acceptance with God, provided only he will enter into covenant with God in Christ, through repentance and faith. Then it speaks, further, of the glorious prospect that is opened up to the believer : his complete riddance from evil, as to its guilt and its power ; the present investiture of the soul with a moral holiness, through the Spirit's operation ; and the future ransom of the body from the grave, a glorified body resembling that of the Redeemer. It unfolds to us the mighty design of God, in creation, in providence, in grace, to prepare the way for the future enthronement of Christ as the universal Sovereign, “ King of kings and Lord of lords.” And then we observe, that the apprehension of this truth so glorious in its nature, is ever more and more clear in proportion to the willingness with which it is received. Beyond all question there is an unfolding of more and more truth to each honest and humble inquirer. “ The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.” “ Thou meetest,” it is written, “ him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember Thee in Thy ways.” And again : “ Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord.” Fresh views open upon the enraptured spirit, in proportion as the life is more and more conformed to the will of God. Obedience qualifies for making new and larger discoveries, while it enables also for taking a clearer view of what is already known. And oh ! then, if the soul be enriched by knowledge—if it be benefitted through the acquaintance it gains of the character and the purpose of Jehovah—if it is actually elevated in proportion as it gains a larger intelligence in respect of God's dealings with mankind, of the present condition and the future inheritance of the believer—and if all this intelligence is given in the exact ratio to the believer's honest and upright walking,—surely, in the communication of knowledge thus vouchsafed we may discern the truth of the assertion—“ Do not My words do good to him that walketh uprightly ?”

Again : the words of God accomplish a most important purpose with reference to the believer's sanctification, or his actual preparation for heaven. When our blessed Saviour made entreaty for the sanctification of His converts, He referred to the Word of God as the instrument to be employed for that purpose. “ Sanctify them,” said He, “ through Thy truth.” And elsewhere an apostle asserts, that “ by the foolishness of preaching it pleases God to save them that believe.” These expressions sufficiently indicate the office of the Word to sanctify the believer. It were endless to enumerate all the methods in which it acts for this great end ; partly it operates through the promises it contains.

These promises being laid hold of by faith, nerve the believer for every duty to which he is summoned. There is the promise of forgiveness of sins, of acceptance with the Father, of the Spirit's aid freely offered to every humble enquirer, of grace commensurate with every need, of help proportioned to our day and necessity; there is the promise that prayer shall be answered, that in reliance upon Divine help sin shall be overcome, temptation mastered, Satan trampled under foot, death conquered and heaven entered. These promises, laid hold of by faith, exert over the believer an energizing influence, prompting him to fresh duties, and sustaining him beneath the pressure of severe trials. Thus they act for his sanctification, presenting to him at all times the constraining motive to flee from all iniquity, and to cultivate holiness in the fear of the Lord. Then besides the promises, there are the threatenings of Scripture; and if the former serve to encourage, the latter serve to warn and rebuke. As I see what threatenings are contained in God's Word against the rebellious, how can I do otherwise than abhor every solicitation to evil? Let a man only realise the awfulness of God's threatenings, as contained in His Word, and he must forsake iniquity and pursue after what makes for his everlasting peace. Thus the threatenings equally with the promises of Scripture become instrumental to the believer's sanctification. And then in addition to all this, there are the examples set before us in God's Word—the record of men who in the midst of much to hinder and oppose, notwithstanding maintained their allegiance, and at length entered upon the “rest” reserved for God's people. Their examples serve to animate the Christian in his great struggle with sin and combat with temptation. He turns to the bright array of those who have obtained a “good report” through faith, and he derives from the history of their triumph the warrant to expect that he, too, may conquer, if relying upon the same source of strength.

In all these respects, then, the Word of God acts for the believer's moral purification, and thus benefits him for time and for eternity. But then it is only the man who walks “uprightly” to whom this benefit is applied. The promise, for example, cannot advantage any but the consistent disciple. No man has a right to appropriate a single promise of God's Word, who is not resolved upon striving after obedience. He may wrongly appropriate a promise; but in this case it will only injure, through emboldening him in sin. It is the “upright” walker before God to whom alone the promise in reality belongs. And so with respect to every other mode in which the Word is intended to benefit: the condition of benefiting is upright walking. What warrant can I have for turning to the example of saints for comfort, except I am aiming to resemble them in holiness? Whereas, only let there be the endeavour, consistently maintained, to walk uprightly, and then can we set no limit to the good which God's words are adapted to cause. Yes, if they furnish that knowledge which most enriches, and elevates, and ennobles; if they teach man what is his origin, what his present condition, what his future destiny; if they supply him an unerring rule of conduct upon every occasion; if they present “a light for his feet and a lamp for his path;” if they teach him the true method of salvation, through Christ's obedience unto death; if they contribute to his moral sanctification—animating him by promises, rebuking and warning him by threatenings; if they stimulate him by the record they furnish of men who, similarly circumstanced with himself, have yet been enabled to achieve the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; and if they assure him that, through reliance upon the proffered help of Divinity, he may in like manner vanquish evil, and attain everlasting life—then let the record of every believer's experience be brought forward to give a verdict of approval to the truth of the declaration—“Do not My words do good to him that walketh uprightly?”

May we carry away with us, then, the recollection of this great truth—namely, that in order to profit by God's words, whether as communicated to us on the page of inspiration, or by the ministrations of the Gospel, there must be an endeavour on our parts to walk uprightly, or to walk in agreement with what God's Word prescribes. It is an inestimable privilege to be familiar with the pages of Scripture; it is an unspeakable blessing to have the means of grace—the opportunities of hearing that engrafted Word which is able to save the soul. No language can overstate the value of the Scriptures as the boon of God to earth; of all the gifts of God which are strewn so plentifully around us, there is none to compare with the gift of the Bible—the charter of man's

privileges now, of his hopes for the hereafter. To be destitute of the Bible were to be left to darkness, to uncertainty, to error ; to be the prey of falsehood and superstition, without a guide on earth ; without a ray of comfort in death, or of hope for eternity. It is the Bible, and the Bible alone, which instructs me in all that is most precious for me to know ; without the Bible I might indeed have come to trace the path of planets in their orbits, to know each star that studs the canopy of heaven ; but never could I have known the Bright and the Morning Star—the only Star by which to navigate securely the ocean of life towards the haven of eternity. Without the Bible, I might wander over the paths of nature, have come to call every tree of the forest by name, every herb of the field, and every flower of the garden ; but never could I have ascertained the properties of the Rose of Sharon, the Lily of the Valley, the Balm of Gilead—the sovereign remedy for a diseased and sin-sick soul. I might have come to know all the numbers of arithmetic ; but the Bible alone could teach me so to “ number my days as to apply my heart unto wisdom ;” and to ask, “ what shall it profit if I gain the whole world, and lose my own soul ?” Precious and costly boon ! more valuable than all the mines of earth ; the treasures of the deep sea, or the diamonds of the sky. Without the knowledge its pages will teach, the wisest philosopher is ignorant, the mightiest monarch weak, the wealthiest of the wealthy poor. Possessing its truth, the very babes and sucklings are wise ; the meanest are noble ; the weakest are strong. But oh ! recollect, I beseech you, that would you be blest by the Bible, you must take it as the rule of your conduct ; its sentences “ do good to those alone that walk uprightly.” Go to it, then, we beseech you, as your guide to duty, as well as your comfort in sorrow. Seek to act on its precepts, and you shall thus gain strength from its promises. When you hearken to the ministrations of the Gospel, search and compare the word preached with the Word written ; recollect that by the Word are we to be judged, and that if the possession of this Word is to do us good—if it is to lead to our future salvation, and to be the means of our escape from perdition, the annexed condition is—“ Do not My words do good to him that walketh uprightly ?”

## WONDERS OF OLD.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. HUGH McNEILE, D.D.

PREACHED IN ST. JUDE'S CHURCH, LIVERPOOL,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, NOV. 14, 1847.

*"And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember Thy wonders of old."*—Psalm lxxvii. 10, 11.

"THEY that are whole, need not a physician, but they that are sick." When there is a competent physician to be had, the first step towards healing a sick man is to produce in him a consciousness of his sickness, so that he is willing to call in assistance. When a man is dangerously ill, and at the same time wholly unconscious of it, nay, quite decided in his own mind that he is well, so that he does not think of asking for medical assistance, and resents with impatience the very notion that he requires it, then is his case deplorably hopeless." In natural things, a man so situated, having symptoms of disease fatally decisive, and yet, perseveringly declaring himself quite well, would, in the estimation of his friends and relatives be of unsound mind, and very naturally and justly so. In spiritual things, this is precisely the unsoundness of mind with which we have to deal in the majority of persons around us. They are dangerously ill for eternity. Symptoms fatally decisive present themselves on every side; unbelief, worldliness, levity, and such like, proclaim to every observer capable of forming a scriptural judgment, that the souls of these men are sick unto eternal death; yet if we approach one, and say so, however tenderly and affectionately, it is resented as an undue interference and intrusion, and no attempt is made to call in the assistance of the only competent Physician. What can be done for such persons? The only thing we can do for them is to repeat our remonstrance from time to time, with all affection and tenderness, as opportunity serves, submitting to the ill treatment in return to which we expose ourselves, and praying, in the mean time, that it may please God mercifully to convey to them such a sense of their sickness as will induce them to have recourse to the true Physician of souls.

But though many, too many, are such as I have described, all are not so. Some there are who have been convinced of their sins, who have had recourse to the Physician, and have also had happy experience of His power to heal, and who ever remember what God was to them in those days of salvation. But they have had a relapse; and the worst feature of their case now is, that they doubt whether God will again take their case in hand. They do not doubt that there is forgiveness for sinners in the first instance, but they consider their own ingratitude in relapsing so peculiar, as to make it doubtful whether there be forgiveness for them. In this seventy-seventh Psalm, we have David in such a condition. He had relapsed into some sins whose circumstances are not set before us, but the complaint which he utters betrays intense pain; pain arising from the apprehension that God would not hear him any more, and from the conviction that if that were the case he must be utterly ruined. This is followed by a cause for the complaint detected, and then a remedy is announced. The complaint itself is bitter. "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted." The state of his mind he compares to an open running sore, continuing a foul discharge in spite of every attempt to staunch it. Thus was his soul pouring forth accusations against itself, of the deadliest

character, accompanied with distrust of Him who alone could remedy its condition. "My soul refused to be comforted."

Now of course I shall speak in vain, on such a subject as this, to those who have never felt spiritual sickness. It was for that reason I said at first—"They that are whole, need not a physician;" and I apprehend that they who think themselves well, will not attend to a physician. Yet for the sake of the sick ones the subject must be introduced. There may be some of you in this sort of sickness occasioned by a relapse into sin. You, brethren, will know what is meant by the words, "a sore running and not ceasing," "a soul refusing to be comforted." You will know what it is to hear everything that can be said about the mercy of God, and while you admit it as a general truth, to feel that it has no application to yourselves; to have no disposition to deny it as a fact in reference to others, yet to be without the slightest thought of self-application. We are sometimes called to see persons who are under such visitations of spiritual sickness; and very distressing are all such cases. It is melancholy to perceive how every argument is thrown away upon such parties; how the soul does indeed "refuse to be comforted;" how, following its own train of thought all the while you are speaking, it bursts forth in fresh complaints, without the least regard to all the consolations which you are endeavouring to set before it; and after you have detailed what ought to be consolatory, only pouring forth renewed accusations against itself. "Oh!" says the man, "oh! the blasphemy, oh! the hypocrisy, oh! the vileness of my soul! I cannot, I will not, be comforted." And so this goes on, no matter what is said to convey comfort; the soul refuses it, loathes it, puts it away; the foundations of it have been undermined, and the poor wretch is prostrate under the effect of this relapse into sin. "I remembered God," says the psalmist, "and was troubled." The expression "troubled," is frequently used to describe the sea in a storm, when the waters are agitated; it is used to describe the wicked, who are said to be "like the troubled sea." It is here used by David to describe the state of his own soul when he "remembered God;" whether it were that he remembered His majesty and was terrified, or that God having been a Comforter to him in time past, he was now troubled because his comfort was lost. "I complained; my spirit was overwhelmed." Then he addresses God: "Thou holdest mine eyes waking; I am so troubled that I cannot speak." Why, what a desperate condition is this! Let me ask, has any sinner among you—and doubtless there are many who have sinned, sinned even worse than David—has any sinner among you been kept from sleep by an intense feeling of penitence, sorrow, and shame, or by despair in the presence of God? Why should not sin have the same effect now as it had once? Why, if there be a reality in our sorrow for it, should it not affect men as it did? Why do we read this passage and other portions of the Bible, just like parrots, without mental or personal application? How can we admit that the Word of God "liveth and abideth for ever," and expresses what the children of God feel in all ages, and yet read it without feeling it? "I have considered," says the psalmist, "the days of old, the years of ancient times: I called to remembrance my song in the night." Doubtless that refers to his recalling to mind a period when he could rejoice in God; when, instead of being so downcast, he mingled songs, spiritual songs, with his prayers; when his joy in the Lord was so great that he was not content with petitioning, but burst forth into thanksgiving. He remembers this as a bright vision of the past, which he has forfeited and lost. By relapsing into sin he has cast himself down from that brightness and blessedness which he once enjoyed; and this serves to enhance the mischief.

Now, as I have already said, we do not know the circumstances under which this psalm was written. We do not know the particular cause which led to this state of mind. It may have been a worldly temptation; it may have been some encroachment upon his spiritual thoughts, such as that to which I was calling your attention this morning,\* something which stole away his mind from God, until thoughts of God ceased to have any practical power over him, and then, perhaps, some worldly temptation ensnared and betrayed him. But whatever the cause may have been, the language is that of a backslider in heart, who, having been for a season "filled with his own ways," is now awakened to consider his condition, and with terror enters into the consideration that he has so far fallen that it is out of his power to rise again. He thus

\* See ante, No. 1,373, p. 316.

goes on in the strugglings of distrust, until at last there is a gleam of hope. But mark how his distrust expresses itself : "Will the Lord cast off for ever ? and will He be favourable no more ? Is His mercy clean gone for ever ? doth His promise fail for evermore ? Hath God forgotten to be gracious ? hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies ?" Is my case too bad even for God's mercy ? Here is a fresh feature in the complaint. There is not a mere sense of his own vileness, and a pouring forth of the horrid contents of a soul that was so sunk in opposition to God that it had no peace, no comfort, in thinking of Him, but there is now an approach to God, or at least a return to consider what God is. 'Is He unable or unwilling to reach such a case as this ? Is it such a case of aggravation that He must turn away from it ? "Will He be favourable no more ?" Is a relapse into sin, after having known the sweetness of redemption, after having known what it was to trust God—is this so fatal that there is no possibility of return to peace and favour with God afterwards ?' This is the question, the real question, when the sinner, possessed of Christian advantages and Christian obligations, has relapsed into sin—Is there forgiveness for such an one ? [This is the question which arises after the sin has ceased to enslave him, after it has ceased to hold him captive. So long as he remained enslaved by it, the question was—'Shall I give up this darling indulgence ?' and while that was his feeling he could not deal with God about the matter at all. But now he is willing to give it up, and the question is, 'Is it not too late ? Will God have me back ?' Supposing I do relinquish this indulged and discarded sin, have I, in the mean time, so ruined myself,—have I, in the mean time, so gone beyond the extent of Divine forbearance, as to have undone my hope, as well as my present peace ? Can I come back ? Will God have me back ?' This is the question, my friends.

Now let me entreat you to consider fairly with yourselves, how this matter stands at the present moment. Some of you may be enslaved at this moment, carried captive by a sin which you are not yet willing to relinquish ; I warn you, that as long as you are not willing to relinquish it you can have no real dealings with God about the matter ; for He knows the state of your hearts, and is cognisant of your every thought. But how shall you ascertain whether you are willing to relinquish the sin or not ? There is a simple appeal to your sincerity, but the mode of trial depends upon the nature of the sin. If it be the commission of some crime which there is no opportunity to repeat, your sincerity cannot then be so strictly tested as if there were an opportunity to repeat it. It may be a sin, the advantage of which you are still reaping. Suppose, for instance, it be some successful dishonesty ; suppose you are at this very moment in possession of property obtained by fraud, and, when you come to consider your state before God, you ask yourselves the question—'Am I sincere ? Do I desire to have pardon for the sin, and to be healed in my spiritual life ?' Well, the test here is simple. What was acquired by fraud must be restored. And if the parties to whom it of right belongs cannot be found, still it must not be wasted on yourselves ; it must not be appropriated to your private use ; it must be dedicated to some other service, or given in God's service, as a test of sincerity.

Well, supposing that merciful point turned, and that there is willingness, I would now turn from an attempt to fasten conviction, and I would speak to those in whom God has fastened conviction, in the hope of bringing relief to their troubled souls. Suppose that it has pleased God, in His mercy, to fasten convictions deep and sincere ; that you are really willing to part with the evil and its advantages, if they can be so designated ; that you are, so far as man can discern, sincere in this matter, penitent for, and willing to give up, the iniquity, anxious to return to God ; and now the question is, 'Will He receive you ? Will He be favourable, or will He not ? Is there hope in such a case, or is there not ?' You see how the psalmist was tried in the struggle between distrust and faith. In the language of the text, faith begins to appear instead of distrust. "And I said, this is my infirmity." 'I have discovered the cause of this alarm ; it is not any change in God, it is a change in me ; it is not God's caprice, but man's infirmity ; the cloud has not descended from heaven, it has arisen from earth. "This is my infirmity." I am not able to bear up against the pressure which this relapse has caused, I am not able to look aright at the remedy. "This is my infirmity ;" it is unbelief.' This infirmity is preceded by other infirmities in the case of the Christian ; it is produced by a long series of worldliness, introducing the things of the world



into the mind ; so that the things of God have lost their power, the character and work of God have lost their influence. God has not been thought of or brought before the mind, and as the result of this state of things, comes this want of power to lay hold of Him. 'It is my infirmity that I am not able to trust in God.' But, it is a mercy to discover this. Well, here is the discovery made. The cause of the complaint is now detected. It is not any want of mercy in God, not any want of willingness or power in Him to save, but it is man's infirmity.

This being the case, we are prepared to seek for a remedy. If the nature of the mischief were such that something more was required on the part of God than He has actually done, then we could look for no remedy ; we could not induce Him to do more. If the case required some fresh redemption to be wrought, the hope must be vain ; we could not procure any fresh redemption. If the cause of the complaint were anything in heaven, we must "let it alone for ever." It is well, then, that we have made thus much of discovery, that the cause is upon earth ; that it is in ourselves, in our own infirmity. If we can find an appropriate remedy for this, we can find one for the very depth of the disease.

And now what is the remedy ? "I said, this is my infirmity." "But what, —what shall I do ? What can I do ? Why, the infirmity in question is, that I cannot trust God. Then what must I do ?" "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High ; surely I will remember Thy wonders of old." To remember the works and wonders of God ; this is the remedy—this is the cure for our infirmity, to recal His majesty, His power, His greatness, as manifested in His works. And what does the psalmist then proceed to do ? He refers to the great work of Israel's redemption, which is typical of a greater redemption still. He enlarges upon Israel's redemption out of Egypt, all the facts connected with it being calculated to recover in his mind a sense of God's power and goodness, His goodness shown in providing for Israel, His power in Israel's deliverance. "I will meditate also of all Thy work, and talk of Thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary : who is so great a God as our God ? Thou art the God that doest wonders : Thou hast declared Thy strength among the people." Here, then, we are approaching the remedy ; when we can magnify God, and proclaim His greatness, and advance to the declaration of His power, as exhibited on behalf of His people. "Thou hast with Thine arm redeemed Thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. The waters saw Thee, O God, the waters saw Thee ; they were afraid : the depths also were troubled." The psalmist here refers to the Red Sea. Personifying the waters, he invests them with sensibility to perceive the approach of God ; he describes them as departing at that approach, in order to leave a pathway for the ransomed to pass over. "The clouds poured out water : the skies sent out a sound : Thine arrows also went abroad." We do not read of this in the book of Exodus ; but these things, it appears from the psalmist's account, accompanied the passage of Israel through the Red Sea. There were clouds, there were thunders, there were lightnings ; "the earth trembled and shook. Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known." There is a mystery about all this ; there is an outward act such as we can understand ; there is a depth through which we cannot penetrate ; there is a path through the water where Israel walked, and God's power was manifested ; but God's own path is in the deep waters, no man can trace it. "Thou leddest Thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses." This is the way, my brethren, to recount God's wonders. Those wonders are still to be set before us, although we have greater wonders to turn to. Wonders in the outward and visible world are well calculated to recover, in the mind's eye of those who believe them, a sense of God's presence, power, and majesty. There were His people, His "chosen nation," who had too often relapsed into sin, waiting to be delivered from the hands of the king of Egypt. They were brought into a defile that they might witness the power of God. They had the sea in the front, and the host of Pharaoh in the rear, and the voice of the Lord went forth by Moses telling the people to go forward—forward into the deep waters. Here they were, upon the shore of the Sea, with the proud host of Pharaoh moving towards them, but "the waters saw God" and separated, "the depths were troubled," a highway was made, the waters stood as a wall on the right hand and on the left, till His ransomed people had passed over. Then they sang His praise. "I will sing to the Lord ;

He hath triumphed gloriously ; the horse and his rider He hath thrown into the sea." The Lord troubled the host of Pharaoh ; He brake their chariot wheels, so that they dragged slowly along the sand ; they could not overtake His little ones ; even the women and children passed safe through the sea ; and while the chariots of Pharaoh were broken and travelled with difficulty through the sand, the little ones of the Lord passed safely to the other side. By that time the waters returned and overwhelmed the Egyptians. Thus did the Lord deliver His people ; and this deliverance is magnified wherever the praises of God are sung. "The sea saw it and fled, Jordan was driven back ; the mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest ? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back ? Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams ; and ye little hills, like lambs ? Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob ?"

Now thus realise what God is, and your infirmity will disappear. He is the God of redeeming love ; He is the God possessing a power of sovereign interference in behalf of His people ; He is the God who hath interfered by a higher redemption than that of Israel out of Egypt, even the redemption of His own dear Son. Here was a greater difficulty to contend with ; here was a body of sinners pursued, not by the king of Egypt, but by Satan the great enemy of God and man. And here were dangers to be overcome ; here were difficulties indeed ; not the Red sea, not opposing mountains, but the law of God, the truth of God, the righteousness of God, the justice of God, the holy anger of God against sin, the moral government of God, requiring that the sinner should be cast into everlasting fire. The Red Sea is nothing compared with this barrier. And how is it to be broken through ? How is this to be done ? Not by force—this may not be. The high principles of righteous justice and judgment require that the law should be respected. Here, my brethren, is the remedy for all the complaints of the poor distressed soul. Like a trembling sinner, look to the Lord Jesus Christ coming forth to the rescue ; behold "the Word that was with God, and was God," becoming man, and taking the manhood into the Godhead. See Him toiling in man's nature, performing man's duty, enduring man's curse. Look at Him discharging every duty which man was called upon to discharge, magnifying God's law, and making every response which a reasonable creature should make to the law of his Maker. See every feeling, every thought, every act, exactly what God would have it to be ; behold Him perfect, doing everything which man is required to do, without the slightest failure. And do not imagine that this was an easy task, nor suppose, that because He was God, there was no difficulty in this work. He emptied Himself of His majesty that He might feel the difficulty ; He was weighed down by the pressure of this work ; "groaned, being burdened," and uttered strong cryings to God ; He "cried to Him who was able to save Him from death ;" "He was a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." "It pleased God to bruise Him," and to "put Him to an open shame." There was no make-believe in this ; it was reality—the reality of a man toiling and suffering ; "sweating great drops of blood." Yes, it was real, and it was perfect. "God so loved the world, that He gave His Son," His beloved Son, to be our ransom ; He "so loved the world," while every impediment was yet in the way, at a time when the barriers of justice had not been broken down, and the strongest reasons existed, why nothing of kindness should be done for such a world. Now, there is what He has done to be pleaded ; but before it was done "God so loved the world" that He gave His Son to die for it ; He "so loved the world" when men were "dead in trespasses and sins," and were "enemies to Him by wicked works." Thus the love of God was not in the way of debt, but in the way of free gift—spontaneous generosity ; it was not the giving of something which He grudged to give, and the withholding the remainder on account of man's ingratitude ; but there was a display of God's generosity from first to last. He gave His Son to carry through the work which He commenced ; and "if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Why should God stop in His work now after having done so much ? Having commenced in love, having persevered through toil and suffering, and all for His own glory, and in gratuitous benevolence to us who deserved nothing, what should now stop Him ? Here are considerations to help our infirmity. Will He be gracious ? Will He be

favourable? Will He receive back the poor helpless sinner who has relapsed into sin? Oh! man's doubting "is his infirmity." Let him say, then, "I will remember the wonders of God's redeeming mercy; I will recal the cross; I will go again to Gethsemane; I will stand there again and behold that wonderful Sufferer; I will listen again to His wonderful prayer, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." I will meditate on that cup; I will consider the bearing of that upon my case. There is the cup which contains the bitterness which man's sin had deserved, and which might well have fallen upon me; most righteously had I deserved it. Can I be restored to the favour of God? Can I, a poor helpless creature, who have apostatised again and again and relapsed into sin against my better judgment, and against the remonstrances of my conscience; can such a blind, helpless, vile, hypocritical wretch return unto God? Oh! I will remember all the ingredients which were in that bitter cup; I will remember that there was God's righteous anger against hypocrisy, against ingratitude, against blasphemy, against impurity, against dishonesty, against fraud, against reluctance to yield up the fruits of fraud; I will remember that in that cup is the curse deserved by all these things. "Surely I will remember God's wonders of old," and I will argue with myself—My soul, look again! "Why art thou disquieted?" "why art thou cast down?" Look again, and consider the wonders of God's mercy. If the Son of God died for sinful men, what more can be asked? What more can be needed than to have confidence in Him?

This, my friends, is the only way of recovery. There can be no recovery but this from such a disease as I have described. There is no recovery by lapse of time. Forgetfulness is not recovery, even if it could be retained. There is no recovery by superstitious observances; these do but daub the wall with untempered mortar, they do but heal the wound of the people slightly—they do but salve it over on the surface, leaving the sore within. There is no recovery by substituting for the inward workings of the heart, the outward workings of the senses; there is no recovery from a disease which has arisen from some idolatry of gold or silver, in having recourse to an idolatry of wood and stone. There is no recovery by the devices or traditions of men, or by the superstitions of a church. There is no recovery but by the majesty of God, the power of God, the works of God, the character of God as manifested in Jesus Christ. Here, and here alone, is recovery. "Surely I will remember God's works of old."

Look again, and be lightened in heart, ye poor trembling sinful creatures, who have relapsed against your judgment and conscience, and are now ready to despair. Is it likely that I address many such this evening? Have we many tokens of such feelings? Not many, but there may be some, and the consolation of one such will outweigh a whole congregation of the careless. God casts His eye upon such an one with peculiar tenderness, and He is, I trust, sending to him a message of deliverance, for His dear Son's sake.

Oh! you who have at present peace with God by faith in Jesus Christ, be careful against relapses which open such sores as that of which I have now been speaking. Beware of relapses against your conscience; stand fast in the Lord God; hold fast a "good conscience," which "some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck." And ye, to whom I have been especially addressing myself, burdened, heavy-laden, helpless creatures, I entreat you, beware, beware of despair. Despair! what reason can you assign for that? Has God ceased to be gracious to you in an outward sense? Does He not spare your health notwithstanding your treatment of Him? Does He not spare your friends, your kindred, your families, your comforts? Has He not spared many things, which, if angry, He might take away from you? Do not suppose for a moment that He is unwilling to rescue your soul from its present deplorable state. Has your "sore run in the night," and have you "refused to be comforted?" Learn, now, that "this is your infirmity." Look, again, at what God has done; observe what Jesus Christ is to you. See if there be a single pang you have deserved to endure that He has not already suffered for your sake. What more could you desire? God is infinitely willing to receive you freely, to heal your backslidings, and to breathe peace again into your souls. Oh! "hope in God." You "shall yet praise Him, who is the light of your countenance and your God." Lift up your hearts; look unto Jesus, and your poor troubled souls shall be comforted.

My dear friends, consider what God is. Even if your case were worse than it is, all that you could desire is provided. God is "well pleased" with His Son. There is nothing else than this in the Gospel. If there be not this, what is there in the Gospel? If there be not recovery; if there be not acceptance for the sinner; if we have not authority from God to "declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins," then what are the tidings which we have to tell? Oh! these are the tidings—"He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel." You have been repenting, you are now broken down with sorrow, and you do not doubt the Gospel except in your own case. Here, then, is our message to you: 'He who repents and believes the Gospel; he who believes—not that Christ died for him—that is not the Gospel, —but that He died for sinners; he who believes this, has absolution and remission of sins from God.' This is our message. Be restored, then; be comforted, cheered, refreshed. And be strengthened also against the prevailing temptations that would keep you away from God. Come back, to sweet fellowship with your Father, that you may walk in His ways and delight in His companionship.

And now, before I conclude, let me revert, for one moment, to those of whom I spoke at first, those who know nothing at all about this, to whom the whole subject is as completely strange, as if the language were strange. Nay, the case is even worse. Some of you, on hearing such an account of the trials of Christians, of their temptations and troubles, their anxieties and alarms, their relapses into sin and approaches to despair—some of you, I say, may be tempted to feel—'Why, if this be the case, what advantage is there in adopting such a religion, or in displaying such earnestness for the Gospel?' Thus do I imagine it quite possible that the enemy of souls may have begun to whisper in your souls to-night, that it is better to be, as indeed you have been, careless about the whole matter, than to be so agitated and distressed as Christians are. Well, my brethren, I admit, that "if in this world only we had hope in Christ, we should of all men be most miserable;" I admit that there are sorrows peculiar to the Christian, of which the men of the world know nothing; I admit that the men of the world know not so much trouble as Christians in their life, sometimes not even in their death, that "they are not in trouble like other folk;" I admit that they go with an easy step and a gay countenance, and a comparatively light heart, through the greater part of their lives, sometimes through the whole of them; I quite grant all this—and what then?—what then? That is the question. If this were the only world we had to live in, of course we should take no pains at all about this matter; but if it be not the only one, again I ask, what then? What will avail the easy gaiety of a life free from anxiety and repentance when it comes to an end in the fires of hell; when God is seen for the first time as an enemy; when Christ is known for the first time as an enemy coming to dash His foes in pieces, and instead of a Saviour is met as an avenger? Then will you look back on a life of gaiety and ease with inexpressible regret and horror; then will you be ready to say—"Would to God that I had felt the pangs of penitence; would to God that I had felt that disease which I heard preached about; would to God that my heart had been pierced on account of sin, that I had groaned in sorrowing penitence with the church of God upon earth, in order that I might know Him as a Saviour whom now I must know for ever as an enemy!" Yes, now is your time; repent and believe the Gospel. Do not be deterred by this account of the inward sorrows of some of God's people. Repent, I say, and believe the Gospel. For, after all, with all our sorrows and all our trials, with all our relapses and all our bitter sores, and all our refusings to be comforted, and all our cryings of spirit; after all, and with all these, we are the happiest people upon earth; happier when weeping over sin, than you when laughing in sin; happier kept from sleep at night by penitence, than you enjoying a midnight revel of gaiety and sport. Be not deceived; join us and you will be blessed. Believe the Gospel: cast in your lot with the sorrowers on earth, that you may not sorrow in hell for ever.

THE FIRST OF A COURSE OF LECTURES  
ON THE  
CONNEXION BETWEEN  
NATURAL PHILOSOPHY AND REVEALED RELIGION.

DELIVERED IN VERULAM EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, LAMBETH,  
ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 24, 1847,  
Before the Members of the Church of England Young Men's Society,  
(South West London Auxiliary,)

BY THE  
REV. HENRY CHRISTMAS, M.A., F.R.S., F.S.A.  
Minister of the Chapel.

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*"Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge."*—  
Psalms xix. 2.

In addressing you, my brethren, on such a subject as that which we shall have to discuss in the present, and in the five following Lectures, we are quite aware that we lay ourselves open to some objections; for it may be said especially that an association of young men who are banded together for missionary purposes, and whose very title shows that they are thus associated, in order "to aid the cause of missions at home and abroad," are very little connected, essentially connected and by virtue of their association, with any scientific questions; and that the connection therefore of physical science with revealed religion is one which, to them *as an association*, can possess comparatively little interest. We do not hereby mean to say, that it would be likely to be objected that they are uninterested in a question like this, but that it can hardly be brought fairly before them by reason of their being thus associated. And moreover, as it has been observed, and not always without reason, that the spirit of scientific research and the spirit of true and genuine piety are not invariably found synchronising, so it may be said that the spirit of scientific research may be pursued, and pursued with a certain degree of success also, and neither tend to open the mind to religious influences, nor to induce us to regard the phenomena of nature, as leading us to contemplate her Divine Author.

But to such objections we feel ourselves bound to make this reply—that our object is not so much to render Christianity scientific as to render science Christian; and as we know that the present day is a day of universal inquiry, and a day when the mind is actively engaged in the pursuit of truth, and especially the mind of those rising among us, and more especially still those rising to eminence among us by their position, by their energies and by the industry which they display, then we say that we are doing a service to them, and doing a service to the cause of truth at large, if we point out to them *the unity of ALL truth*—if we call their attention to that great fact, which cannot be too frequently contemplated, and on which it is impossible to lay too much stress, that Christ in declaring Himself to be "the truth," as well as "the life" and "the way," indicates to us, that He concentrates in Himself ALL VERITY, and that we cannot by any means apply our minds to the study of truth, no matter in what way we seek for it, without having ourselves indirectly brought to Him. It may not indeed be always sufficient to bring us *rightly* to Him; it may not be always sufficient to bring us to a saving knowledge of Him; but we do maintain that the pursuit of *any* truth rightly pursued will bring us finally to the contemplation of Him who is its source and centre. And therefore we conceive that we are well warranted in bringing before an association banded together, as we have said, for religious purposes, "*for aiding the cause*

*of missions at home and abroad,"* the aspects of truth as presented to us by the Book of Nature, contemplated with reference to the aspects of truth as presented to us by the Book of Revelation. And having thus spoken concerning the objection which may indeed on the threshold of our inquiries be brought against us, we shall now proceed also to say, that our object is not to enter at large upon a disquisition of *all* those vast and important questions which so extensive a field will present to us, (for this would require not a few short lectures, but many and large volumes,) but simply to point your attention to one or two of the most important facts, one or two of the most interesting coincidences connected with each of those branches of science on which we shall touch, in order to make out that proposition with which we started, that there is an unity in all truth, and that we cannot rightly read the Book of Nature, without reading therein the will of God.

Now in pursuing an investigation like this we shall naturally be led, in the first place, to the very earliest ages of creation; we shall consider how it is that this world, or rather this universe, sprang into existence; we shall be led to consider by what power it was ordained, by what instruments it is governed, according to what principles it is kept up; and we shall endeavour therefore to ascertain how far we can reconcile, if any reconciliation be necessary, the information derived from the researches of natural philosophy with the information given to us by the records of God's truth.

In speaking, then, concerning the history of the creation, and recalling your thoughts to the very earliest ages, we shall find that the first as well as the most important records are those which are given to us in the books of Moses. And here it may be well just *in limine* to observe, that we are no longer able to take the books of Moses as they have sometimes been taken, namely, as being the entire and perfect production of Moses himself, inasmuch as we find that the latter part of the book of Deuteronomy gives us an account of the death of Moses, and of the Divine appointment of his successor; and also that to a diligent student, and more especially to one who attentively examines the original language, there will appear such variations as will lead him to conclude that these, in the earlier books especially, were separate records bound (as it were) together by Moses, and which therefore come to us as much with the stamp of his authority, as though they were indeed written by his own hand, and which, coming to us with this stamp, are bound to be received by us as the records of inspiration. We say that, in the first place, it is necessary thus briefly to make this remark, because we shall have occasion to recur to it hereafter; and now having touched on this point it will be also necessary for us to state, how far we consider the question of the authority of the books of Moses to bear upon the points which are before us, namely, the great fact that they are to us the records of inspired truth.

Now it will be quite sufficient for our purpose, conceiving and believing as we do, that that which is affirmed by the Scriptures of truth and that which is confirmed by the Word of Christ must necessarily be of Divine authority, to prove that our Lord and His apostles did refer to these books as possessing Divine authority, and did command the Jews to observe them and refer to them as evidences of the Divine mission of our Lord himself. This we say would be an amply sufficient argument for us as Christians. But we have an argument which we can carry a little beyond this, because it applies not only to us as Christians, but it would apply to the Jews also, and moreover, it applies to the general critic as well as to the Jew; and that is, that the Jews, of all men the best calculated to judge concerning their own Scriptures, uniformly did consider the books of Moses as being of Divine authority, and as uniformly considered that all the earlier parts of the books of Moses were, if not absolutely the work of the lawgiver himself, at least collected together by him, and partly, indeed, written by his own hand. Thus they looked on these records as put forth by his authority under the Divine sanction, and consequently to be themselves of Divine authority from the beginning to the end. Here, then, we say, we have an argument which does not apply merely to the Christian, but which applies to the Jew, and beyond the Jew to the general critic, who may be led to inquire what right the Jews had thus to decide and what kind of authority they had when they came to that decision.

Into this question it will be needless for us further to enter at present; first, because as Christians (and I am addressing myself peculiarly to a

Christian Society,) the first reason which we gave, namely, the confirmation of the law by Christ as of Divine authority, is abundantly sufficient for our purpose; next, because it would lead us too far from our subject; and, lastly, because from its very nature it would require us to refer to documents and to lay before you criticisms which would be altogether incompatible with such Lectures as those which I am now engaged in delivering.

It will doubtless be in the recollection of many of you, that there was a question which agitated the philosophical world for many centuries of old, concerning "*the eternity of matter.*" There were those among the philosophers who rightly remembering that it was beyond the power of man to annihilate or destroy one particle of created matter, decided that therefore matter was indestructible; and so far as human power goes they were right in so deciding. But finding that matter was thus indestructible, they proceeded to argue that as matter could never be destroyed, so there could have been no time when matter did not exist. They found that all matter was but derived from matter previously existing in another form, and that there was but a perpetual system of change going on throughout the creation, there being no such thing within the compass of their experience as an absolutely new creation any more than an absolute destruction or annihilation. Observing this they boldly ventured on the assertion that matter was by its own nature eternal—that there never had been a time when there was not a visible creation, and that there never would be a time when that visible creation should cease to exist. They did not indeed contend that the world with its present race of inhabitants, with its present rocks and fountains, with its present groves and hills, with its present animal classes and with its present intelligent denizens—they did not contend that this present state of things had been eternal; but they merely contended, that something had existed out of which all these inanimate things and all these animated beings had been formed, and that there never had been a time, and that there never could have been a time when *nothing* existed at all, save the Divine essence.

Now this question which occupied the attention of the wisest minds century after century, and which, indeed, would appear by its nature to be removed beyond the power of observation, so that mankind could come to no certain mathematical demonstration the one way or the other, is settled for us by the Word of the Divine record. God made all things out of nothing "by the Word of His power," or in other words (for let us not forget the meaning of them) by the Son or His Love, "so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." This, then, is the comment of the New Testament upon those words of the Old: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;" and thus a question which man could never solve, which was altogether beyond the power of his solution, beyond the sphere of his observation rightly to decide, is decided for him by Divine truth; and we find that thereby a new view is given to him of the greatness of God, and he is led to form still grander ideas and more adequate conceptions of the magnificence of Him who "holdeth the seas in the hollow of His hand," and who by "the Word of His power" caused this magnificent creation to spring into existence to His praise.

Here, therefore, we find at once that there is one important scientific question which is set at rest by a reference to the Word of God; and, at the same time that this important scientific question is set at rest, there is a way opened out to new and grand conceptions of the Divine nature, which conceptions tend, if they do not enable us "by searching to find out God," at least to bring His perfections and attributes before us under much more favourable, because much more sublime circumstances, than we could by our own investigations ever have attained.

We find that having thus specifically and succinctly settled this question of the eternity of matter by the few words that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," we are informed subsequently of that which took place after the creation of "the heavens and the earth." We shall neither have time, nor if we had time would it be applicable to our purpose at present, to lay before you any of the theories of the ancients concerning the state of chaos—concerning the notions of some that out of chaos, or a confused mass consisting of the seeds of all things in existence, by some fortuitous concussion, by some strange and inexplicable motion of the atoms among themselves, this

intelligible and intelligent creation was formed : but we will just observe, for this matter is told us by the Inspired writer, that "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep ; and the Spirit of God moved-upon the face of the waters." Thus we have at once given to us the conception of a vast mass, approaching to liquidity, and from that mass the world in its present state, being gradually formed to assume the aspect which it now presents to us, and "the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters." Not that thereby the Divine Creator intended that we should regard the Spirit of God as being localized or confined to one place or as being more *emphatically* there, but simply this. The effect of the Spirit of God thus floating or brooding, as it were, over "the face of the waters" was subsequently to be related, and His presence was thereby of utility to be named, as showing us that it was done by His power, by His immediate interposition, and not by the operation of any certain rules left subsequently to work out their own specific results—that it is by the express and special operation of His Spirit that all things *are* done, that the world was created, that every one of those instances take place which we are in the habit of referring to general laws, and that whatsoever there is done upon earth, as well physically as spiritually, "the Lord doeth it Himself."

The word "cosmogony," which is the term that has usually been given to that science which teaches us concerning the formation of the universe, signifies the "*generation of the world*." And here we may just briefly observe to some of the younger of our hearers, that the very names which are given to the books of Moses, are in themselves highly significant of the great events which they relate to us. "Genesis" signifies creation ; "Exodus" *out going or out-pass* ; "Leviticus" the constitutions of Levi ; the book of Numbers carries its own signification ; and the term "Deuteronomy" is but "*a repetition of the Law*."

To return, then, to the cosmogony of Moses—that is, to the account which Moses gives of the creation or generation of the world—we find him first settling, as we have already observed, the question of the *eternity of matter*, by simply telling us that, "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth : " and lest these words should by subsequent ages be misunderstood, as science advanced with gigantic steps, throwing its torch-light (as it were) over the very face of creation, we find the Divine authority in the New Testament still further explaining and commenting upon them by saying, that God made all things out of nothing "by the word of His power," "so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

Now there was but one express act of creation concerning this physical world—"God created the heavens and the earth ;" and there was also but one act of creation with regard to the spiritual or the intellectual world,—"God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life ; and man became a living soul." Here, then, we have two express acts of creation—the one the creation of matter, the other the creation of spirit. We do not mean to say that there was no creation of spirit before : we have reason to believe, and indeed to know, that there was, and that before Adam was created in the image of God there were those bright spirits who had "kept their first estate," and who were permitted to visit him in that garden of Paradise in which his beneficent Creator had placed him. But so far as we, the inhabitants of this world are concerned, we find that there was but one act of creation regarding the physical, and but one regarding the spiritual world ; the one conveyed to us in the words—"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," the other conveyed to us in the words—"and God breathed into the nostrils of man the breath of life ; and man became a living soul." It will not form any part of our investigation, neither in this nor in any of the lectures in the present course, to speak of the succession of spirit : we have now to do with the physical sciences and their connection with revealed religion, and to that we must confine ourselves.

When, therefore, we are told that God made all things out of nothing "by the Word of His power," "so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear," we have a blow given not only to the doctrine that matter was eternal, but also to another doctrine somewhat associated thereto, that there have been many successive acts of creation. *No* ; we are told here that there are not. "Things which are seen were not made of things which



do appear." God made, in the first place, all things out of nothing, and afterwards, and not till afterwards, did He form those things that were seen. Thus we see that there is indeed a continual succession of beings without any absolutely new creation. The one act of creation having taken place, we are told that God "rested from all His work, which He had made;" and the creative energy having, as it were, thus ceased, and the power of creation having been thus fully developed, we afterwards find God manifesting Himself in the kingdom of Providence.

One subject which has excited much attention, and has been until of late years comparatively little understood, is the circumstance that in the history of creation as given to us by Moses, it is stated that on the first day of creation "God said, Let there be light; and there was light;" whereas it was not until subsequently, on the fourth day, that "God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years." Now probably, what I am about to say to you on this subject, will scarcely be new to any of you; but at the same time, there is one view in which it is not always regarded. We are in the habit so much of regarding the sun as the source of light and of heat, that we are at first struck with some little surprise, on being told of the creation of light on the first day, and the creation of the sun and the moon on the fourth day. Because it may be said, 'Then there was light independently of the sun and the moon, and there could not have been the necessity of "lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night," when we are already told that God had created light independently both of the one and of the other, and also that He had "divided the light from the darkness," and that He had "called the light day," and that "the darkness He had called night."

Here, then, let us suppose that with a passage like this before him, a philosopher of a hundred years ago, had taken up the records of truth, with the intent to find out how far they corresponded with the discoveries of science; and let us suppose him not influenced by the Spirit of God, but at the same time actuated by something like a fair and honest desire to arrive at the truth. We think that we should find him reasoning somewhat after this manner:—"We cannot lay aside the deductions of science; we are certain that our light is derived from the sun, and that our darkness is derivable from his absence; we are absolutely certain, that the moon does give us her reflected light by night, and that without the moon there would be none of that reflected light; we are perfectly certain, that to the whole of the system of which we form a part, the sun is the centre, and source of light and of heat,—that without it there could be neither the one nor the other, and we should be involved in a perpetual cold and in a perpetual darkness; and however these luminaries were created, at whatever period of the history of the universe, certain it is, that they were created for this especial purpose, and that they have fulfilled and must continue to fulfil that purpose, which indeed cannot be accomplished without them." He would proceed to observe—"We are told here, in the very words of this which professes to be Divine truth, that as lights to rule the day and to rule the night, and to be for "lights in the firmament of heaven," these great luminaries were made; and, therefore, we perceive an acknowledgement of that object for which they were created, and which we find that they do fulfil. Our investigation of the nature of light tends to show that it does come from that source; our investigation of the nature of darkness shows to us that it is but the withdrawal of light. We can catch the rays as they come down to us from these bright luminaries; we can divide them into their several parts; we can intercept them by shutting out any particular spot from the access of those rays; and thus we have every kind of proof which a philosophical mind can desire, that the sun is indeed the source and fountain of light, and that the moon, as well as the sun, must have been made, as the records before us tell us they were, for that express purpose. But we find that the lights of the day and the night are not spoken of as being caused by the sun, although we have express authority of the most accurate deductions, and procured by the most philosophical investigations, which show us that they are so; and we must, therefore, come to the conclusion, that Moses, either because he knew not better, or because it was not his province to teach philosophy, did, in compliance with some mistaken,

some erroneous traditions which prevailed in his day, give, at all events, in one respect, an erroneous and mistaken doctrine concerning the very nature of light.' Now he might proceed further to observe, that it is not necessary to throw aside the authority of Moses because we find his doctrines contrary to those proved by the clearest investigation of science. But he might still think that we must take with great caution that which we do find set forth by such a writer as Moses on questions connected with science; and we must understand, that whatever he said concerning the nature of inspiration, Moses, at all events, could not have been inspired for the purpose of teaching us the history of the creation. I say, it would be difficult for a philosopher of a hundred years ago to have argued in a different way from this. He would have been then arguing according to all the clearest deductions of philosophy as it was; there would have been nothing unfair in anything that he stated; and let it be understood, too, that he would have been arguing according to the translation which is given to us of the very words of Moses himself.

But now, if we examine those very words in the light which more recent discoveries have tended to throw on the subject, we shall find that the whole of this objection vanishes, and the torch of rational investigation and real science held up to illuminate the pages of Divine truth. And though they do not need the illumination of man, yet they require to be read with care and attention. And they require, also, that we should not set up that which is in its infancy against that which is mature—that we should not set up the finite knowledge of man against the infinite knowledge of God—and that if we find that there is an express declaration in the Word of God, a declaration so clear that it cannot be misunderstood, of any certain physical fact, then if we find that philosophical deductions are opposed thereto, we must be satisfied with the knowledge that our science, however far it has gone, is as yet in its infancy, and that it cannot, therefore, and must not, be put in opposition to that which is perfect and complete, and wanting in nothing.

Now in investigating this subject, let me here first observe, that it is necessary carefully to examine the *original* words, and not simply a translation; and then we find, that the word which is here rendered "light," does not signify light only, but rather that which may be called sometimes light and sometimes heat, and which, for anything that we know to the contrary, (and we have great reason to believe also that we are more than warranted by truth in saying this)—might be called electricity, might be called galvanism, might be called magnetism, according as it presents itself to us under different aspects. But, furthermore, by recent discoveries, (or, rather, the recent revival of old discoveries,) we are taught to believe that light does not consist in certain particles coming to us in a direct ray from the sun, or any other luminous body, but that light is a fluid, subtle, indeed, and impossible to be made the subject of such experiments as those to which we submit other and more palpable fluids—that it is diffused throughout all space, and capable of being acted on in various ways. Thus, light might have existence without the light being set in action, and light could, and did, exist previously to the existence\* of the sun, which acting upon the light caused it to become visible, and to occupy its proper place in creation. The light previously to this was a latent light, capable of being called into exercise, but which was not made apparent until the sun arose, and by his bright beams caused that fluid to take those fluctuations which render it visible to our eyes. This, we say, is but a recent recovery of an old piece of knowledge. The truth was known (or, rather, the theory was held) long ago; but it has recently been ascertained to be true. And thus by every modern discovery of science we find a light thrown upon the pages of the Divine history, tending to show that those same pages which have frequently been made the subject of the very strongest arguments against the truth of the cosmogony of Moses, are now among the greatest arguments that can be shown to us of its actual correctness. For what would be more unlikely than that a writer professing to give an account of the history of the creation of the world, should begin that account by telling us that light was created independently of the sun—a doctrine altogether con-

\* In speaking of the existence of the sun here, we must be understood to speak of its practical and effective existence. For the sun may have existed as a globe in the course of formation many ages before its becoming the centre of light and heat to a developed system.

trary to the philosophy of his own time, altogether contrary to the philosophy of ages, and many ages afterwards—a doctrine which was in conformity to the philosophy of a very short period, and which has only been now recently revived? We say, nothing can be more contrary to all probability than that a man professing to write as Moses did should propound a theory like this, had he not received, either from direct inspiration, or from tradition founded on truth, the knowledge that *thus* it was. We think that a stronger argument of the authenticity and value of the books of Moses can scarcely be made known than this very simple fact.

Further, although the books of Moses give us no very close account of the system of which we form a part, yet it has been generally supposed that they are in favour of that system which supposes the earth on which we live to be the centre of the whole—that around it there revolve, in their several orbits, sun and moon, planets and fixed stars, and others “fixed in the orb that moves,” as Milton speaks, once in the twenty-four hours, around this terra-queous globe, comprehending the day and the night. This scheme was for a long while supposed to be that which alone could have been maintained, understood, and believed by Moses. Now we must at once and freely admit that this was the doctrine of the day of Moses. We must admit, also, with equal freedom, that it was the doctrine of days long subsequent to Moses. But we must also understand, that at a very early period, as early as the time of Pythagoras, a different notion did prevail, which different notion was subsequently ascertained to be the true one. But we find, if we attentively examine the first chapter of Genesis, that the Divine writers do not pledge themselves to any system, either the one way or the other. If the world had been right in adopting that system which has been called the Ptolemaic system, and which I have been already describing to you, there would have been found nothing in the book of Genesis contradicting it. Neither is there anything in the book of Genesis which contradicts that other system, which we now believe and know to be the true one. The book of the Jewish law-giver neither supports nor contradicts either the one way or the other; in fact, it is not conversant with them. It merely speaks concerning the heavenly bodies, and declares that with regard to our own earth they have such and such offices. And, indeed, this is enough for us; for had the object of Moses been to promulgate a complete and perfect system of philosophy—to give an entire account of cosmogony; had it been his object to leave untouched none of those questions which on such topics might thereafter arise, then it is quite clear to us that there would have been no cause for any scientific researches at all; God then would have made known all which could have been discovered, and the book of science would have been co-extensive with the Book of God. But the Book of God is not intended to teach us science; it is intended simply to lead us into the paths of holiness; and although we have a right to expect, whenever we find any allusion to scientific subjects, any account of cosmogony, or any reference to topics which are connected with physical research, that that account shall be the truth, yet we are not to expect that there shall be given to us *ALL* the truth; neither is it absolutely necessary for the carrying out the purposes for which the Book was written. We are able to ascertain, by looking at the books of Moses now, in the light of Christianity, for what purposes they were written. They were written to show us, to show the whole world, age after age, in what way God had dealt with His people of old, and in what way He intended to deal with them in time to come—how, after the very first dawn of creation, the Gospel was already shedding its lustre over humanity. We find it in the very first account which we have of the fall of man; the bright beam of the promise breaks through the clouds of the Divine wrath; and we are able to trace the effect of that promise step by step, through the wonderful events which happened to the church. We track it under the circumstances of the patriarchal dispensation; we trace it in the ceremonies of the Mosaic law; we trace it in the long train of prophecies, until at length we find its full and perfect development in the coming of Him in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed. Now, inasmuch as this was the reason for which the books of Moses were written, we have no right to expect that there shall be any information given to us totally extraneous to this subject, which does not bear upon it, and is not connected therewith; nay, more, we can only expect that to be revealed which is

so connected therewith that it is *necessary*, for the completeness of the work itself, that we should rightly understand it.

Put furthermore, some recent discoveries have given us a still further reason for taking the literal interpretation of Moses as a true and right one. We know that it has been said long ago that the planets were inhabited like our own; that they had their tribes, if not of men, yet perhaps of intelligent beings; and although we are told here that the moon was created to give a light upon the earth, and we find that the moon does occupy a most subordinate place in the sphere of the universe, yet there was for a long while an idea entertained that the moon was as much inhabited as the world in which we live ourselves; in fact, that it would be but partly and not altogether correctly described as a "great light;" that it were absurd to suppose these vast bodies only made to fling their light over the wastes of creation. We know now, with regard to the moon, at all events, whatever may be said concerning other planets, (which may or may not be inhabited,) that so far as any inhabitation of the moon is concerned, it cannot be by beings like ourselves; for we are now able to see and to discern clearly that the moon is destitute of any moisture, that there are there no seas, no lakes, no rivers, no dews, no clouds; no vegetation, and that if there be any atmosphere, (and we have reason to believe that there is,) it is an atmosphere of so rare and refined a nature, that no beings constituted like ourselves could live therein. Beside which, a large portion of the moon's surface is in a state of volcanic action, for the most part, of the most intense character. There are volcanoes of a far greater proportionate size than any that exist on earth, all blasting and burning and devastating there year after year, age after age. And therefore when we cast our eyes up to that bright and beautiful orb, we are unable now to contemplate it, as once it has been contemplated, as the abode of a sentient and intelligent race; we are now obliged to consider it but as a mass of barren and burning rock wheeling round in its orbit; having indeed the most important offices to perform with regard to this world, causing the tides to refresh and renovate the ocean, bringing clouds over the earth, and acting most beneficially on our globe, but altogether incapable of being inhabited by similar beings, or of being subject to a similar economy.

Here again, then, we have, if not an absolute confirmation of that which Moses has told us, (for as we have already said, the book of Moses was not intended to teach us science, nor is there given us anything which it is not absolutely necessary for us to understand in connection with Divine truth,) yet a light thrown upon the book; the natural probability of that which Moses represents, would lead us to consider the moon some such a globe as that which by our recent discoveries and more perfect telescopes we have ascertained it to be.

We have already stated, that we cannot understand or believe that the work of creation has been a succession of creative efforts, but that having created all things God "rested from the work which He had created and made;" and yet we do observe, that there is a progressive character in creation; we do observe that there are changes which take place in the physical universe, slow and gradual, but nevertheless capable of being noted, and which have been noted. And though we do not admit, and cannot admit, that those changes have operated upon the human race, and that the mind is no longer in its normal condition, or rather in the condition in which it was after the fall—though we cannot, we say, admit that such changes have taken place, as some philosophers have intimated, yet we are by no means prepared altogether to give up the idea of there being a progressive character in creation at large. Many theories may be advanced on this topic, but they would be, like some other subjects of curious and minute investigation, not destitute of interest indeed, but not bearing upon that connection which exists, and which it is our object to point out, between physical science and revealed truth.

And now we must close this lecture, by calling your attention to the analogy which exists between the visible and the spiritual universe. It is impossible to contemplate the account given to us by Moses of the creation of the world, without perceiving that there is not one portion of that history which has not its parallel in the spiritual history corresponding thereto. "The earth was without form and void; darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters;" and the Spirit of God called forth light, and there was light. Here, then, we have an analogy to the

spiritual state of man as he is in his fallen condition. We find that he is indeed spiritually "without form and void," and we find that darkness is over the face of his mind; and we are told that the Spirit of God moves thereupon; by the action of that Holy Spirit of God, light is brought forth, upon that otherwise chaotic mass. The consequence of that light thus illuminating him is to point out to him the danger in which he is, to show him the way to a spiritual amelioration; and that chaotic mass of rude and undigested elements becomes a spirit fully prepared for the service of the Lord; it becomes, to change the figure, a temple fitted for the habitation of the Spirit of God; holy thoughts and pure desires become the ministering spirits of that temple; the man who was previously destitute of light, whose heart was cold, and whose affections were uncultivated, becomes now imbued not only with light, but also with the warmth of Divine love, and redolent with thankfulness to God, who has thus renovated him and filled him with love to beings like himself, and among whom God has created him to dwell. He becomes qualified to take his right place in creation; his mind becomes, as it were, a sphere rolling around Christ in his proper orbit, receiving therefrom a perpetual succession of spiritual life and of spiritual warmth and of spiritual grace; and thus does he go on from perfection to perfection. We know not what the termination of this visible universe shall be, save only that "the elements shall melt with fervent heat," and that there shall be "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." We know not precisely after what manner and under what circumstances this renovation shall take place; and therefore we cannot rightly and fully carry out the analogy that exists between the spiritual and the visible universe in this respect. But we do know, and we do rejoice in the knowledge, that the spiritual universe "shall be satisfied" by a Divine "likeness;" that the members of Christ, who have done and suffered his will here, shall be transported to that everlasting city where there is no sun nor moon, nor light of a candle, but the Lamb of God giveth it light by day and by night.

CHRISTIAN PROGRESS.

A Sermon,

BY THE

HON. AND REV. BAPTIST W. NOEL, M.A.

PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, BEDFORD ROW,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 31, 1847.

*"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect."*  
—Genesis xvii. 1.

THE first act by which Abraham decided his everlasting welfare was, that when the Lord called him, in Ur of the Chaldees, he did not resist that call, but believed the Lord, and "forsook all and followed Him." He then yielded himself up to God, (to use the apostle's language,) because he believed: then Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." Crediting the Divine promises, and committing himself to the Divine mercy, he was accepted, not for any merit of his own, (for he had none,) but because he relied upon God's word of promise. And having thus become a believer, a child of God, he continued to walk in His ways, obediently and gratefully. Many years after, the incident occurred which is announced in our text; and God was here pleased to direct him how he should grow in grace, and having become His child should as a child continually improve. "The Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect." It was thus that Abraham, as a saved sinner, as an adopted child of God, was as long as he remained in this world to improve.

When God gave Abraham this command, He founded it upon the fact of His revelation of Himself to him as "the Almighty God." Abraham was to "walk before God and be perfect," because God was "the Almighty." And as He remains unchangeable, that which was the foundation of Abraham's constant improvement, ought to be a similar foundation of improvement to us. The reason for Abraham's walking before God and being perfect, remains in full force at this day—to all those, at least, who have become like him "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Not that the same obligation does not rest upon the enemies of religion on the earth; but no one can do this, till he has taken the step which Abraham did. But those who have become the children of God have as much reason, because He "is the Almighty God," to "walk before Him and be perfect," as Abraham had. Let us imagine the influence which it would have upon Lot at that time. When Lot heard this message to Abraham from the Almighty, would he not feel that it was equally addressed to him? Was it not as much his duty to "walk before God and be perfect," as it was that of Abraham, his uncle? When Sarah heard that direction from God Almighty to Abraham her husband, could she think that she was less involved in the command, and that she was not as much obligated as Abraham to "walk before God and be perfect?" And then, when Isaac was grown to understanding, would this command have less power with him? And thus it has just the same effect upon us. It is as much addressed to us, as to Abraham. It is the voice of God to His own redeemed family. Every child of God on the earth ought to hear his Almighty Father saying to him—"I am the Almighty God; walk

before Me, and be thou perfect." May we therefore listen to it this morning, as the message of God to us! God having directed Abraham how to walk so as to please Him, may we learn the same lesson, and receive it not only to our understandings but to our hearts, as the direction of our infinitely gracious God to us! "I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect."

That upon which the Divine Being was here pleased to fix the attention of His servant, was His Almighty power. Abraham knew God to be a holy, just, good, and true Being; and His Word reveals Him to us as such. He fastens our attention, then, upon this fact—that all these attributes are in connection with Almighty power; that He is "the Almighty;" Almighty holiness, Almighty justice, Almighty goodness, Almighty truth; that He who is holy, just, good and true, has irresistible power to act according to these great perfections; and as the Creator, the Sovereign, and the Judge, He will act according to these, and does act according to them, with Almighty power.

So holy that He has an infinite love of what is good and an equal hatred of what is evil, He has Almighty power to manifest, in the most signal manner, so that none shall eventually be able to overlook or deny it, that He has this love of excellence and this hatred of iniquity. He will let the world see it, so that not one of His intelligent creatures shall be able any longer to deny it, as millions do now. He "is the Almighty God," who will take care to show His attributes with irresistible power to those who question them.

Being perfectly just, He is therefore able to sustain what is just in the world, and to repress what is unjust—to bless and prosper the just, and to punish the unjust; for He has Almighty power in combination with His justice, and He will, sooner or later, make the unjust to lament their injustice, and the just to rejoice that they have been so.

He has Almighty goodness likewise. Taking delight in blessing His creatures, He has Almighty power to bless all those who have put themselves under His care, and love Him, and look up to Him as their Father. And they have reason to know, that He who has Infinite goodness, taking delight in the happiness of His creatures, has Almighty power to make those who do not wilfully cast away their happiness to bless Him for ever in them; and He has given "exceeding great and precious promises," abundantly reaching all the necessities of His creatures.

And He is Almighty in His fidelity, so that what He has said He can do, while He means to do it; and nothing can baffle the power by which He means to fulfil all His promises to His children, on the one hand, and all His threatenings to His enemies, on the other.

Being thus "the Almighty God," who can and who will bless what is good and punish what is evil—Almighty to save His children and to destroy His enemies—He commands those who believe on Him and are His children, to "walk before Him and be perfect." "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect," is the rule of action which He has given to all those who, having come to Him through Christ, are adopted into His family.

Here are two commands given to them.

The children of God are first directed, by their heavenly Father, to "walk before Him;" that is, to live in His sight—to live as before God.

It pleases Him to call those whom He has redeemed and saved in the world to "live by faith, and not by sight;" and "the things which are seen" being numerous and adapted to our various faculties, and necessarily and ordinarily exercising a powerful influence over us, we are apt to give an excessive influence, through our corruption, to "the things which are seen," and can thus hide God very much from our minds; so that numbers in this world, beyond all doubt, do hide God from their minds, and do not in the least walk before Him. The influence of irreligious thoughts banish Him from their memories, or the engrossing cares connected with the pursuit of things which are temporal banish Him from their thoughts;

they are so busy with the gains and pleasures of this world, that they cannot think of God who is unseen. They would wish to banish Him from their recollection, if the thought of Him presented itself; but after a little while, it does not present itself at all; and this is the case with multitudes in this city, who live week after week, and year after year, with scarcely one serious thought of the Being in whose hand their breath is, from whose power they sprang; on whom alone they are dependent, and through whom alone they can reach everlasting life. Now God knows that this is our tendency in this world, in which we are surrounded by so many "things which are seen and temporal," and in which we are to live by faith—to live on what is unseen, and to allow those things to exercise their legitimate influence upon us as intelligent beings, and rather to live for what is great and enduring, though it is unseen, than for that which, though it is seen, is only temporal; and therefore He bids His children to labour to attain to this habit, and says to those who have come to Him through Christ—"I am the Almighty God; walk before Me." As Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, who also was our example, when He was on earth, "set the Lord continually before Him," so are we called, if we are the disciples of Christ, to "set the Lord always before us." In every scene we visit, we ought to say—"God is here;" in every conversation we hold, we should think—"God hears us;" and whenever we are about to engage in anything, we should say—"God is noticing us;"—and thus we should have the idea of the presence of God—the holy, and just, and good, and true—as an Almighty Being, ever present with us; and so bring, sincerely and solemnly, all our conduct into His sight, entreating Him to scrutinize our very motives, and to search us thoroughly; and not conceal anything from Him, but live in His presence, so that He should be more to us than "the things which are seen," but temporal.

Having said to Abraham, and therefore to all those who are "the children of Abraham," (as believers are called by St. Paul,)—those who walk in the steps of their father Abraham, and have the same faith "imputed to them for righteousness,"—"Walk before Me,"—He has further said to them—"Be thou perfect."

This second precept is not to be used as a separate, though it is a distinct command; it is essentially connected with the former; and the Almighty calls us to walk before Him, in order that we may be perfect—that by walking before Him we may grow towards perfection. Our Lord has given us the same command, when He says to us, as His disciples—"Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." So that He would have us take the perfection of God as our example, and then realise the presence of God as the mean by which we are to obey this command: "Walk before Me; and be thou perfect."

It is evident that to live in the presence of God is calculated very strongly to bring into exercise all the godly dispositions which the Holy Spirit has implanted in each renewed mind. There is scarcely anything more calculated to bring them into lively exercise. Who can live in the presence of God—that great and good and gracious Being, who has redeemed him by His Son, sought him out in his ruined state, and who loves him "with an everlasting love"—that Being who is at once holy, just, good and true, who has Almighty power to bless and to destroy;—who can live in the presence of such a God, and not feel a love to Him for His goodness, and a trust in His Almighty power, and a hope in His mercy and faithfulness through Christ, and a desire of securing His favour and blessing, with a great fear of His anger and great joy in having been brought to Him through grace? There is no renewed person in whom the thought of God Almighty, as a present God, does not bring these dispositions into exercise.

It is declared of our future state, that we shall be like our Saviour, because "we shall see Him as He is." Not because we shall see His eternal glory, which, it is obvious, would have no power to produce such a resemblance; but we shall understand His moral glory, when the cloud is removed from our



nature which corruption had thrown upon it,—and then “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” And even here below, that process is said by the apostle Paul to be imperfectly accomplished, when he says, that “beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory.” Now that which is thus described as a process going on with respect to all who understand and meditate upon the Gospel, is here said to be the result of walking before God. It is indeed nearly the same thing,—living in the presence of an Almighty Being, who by His own sovereign mercy has sought us out and saved us, and One whose great perfections are absolutely pledged for our happiness in time and in eternity. He who thus lives in the presence of God must thus love Him, must be grateful to Him, must trust in His power and faithfulness; must hope for the fulfilment of His promises, must desire His favour, must reverence Him and fear Him, and feel a holy joy at having been reconciled to Him through grace.

Whenever, then, these godly dispositions are produced by a sense of the presence of God Almighty, you may see at once how they tend to accomplish this command: “Walk before Me; and be thou perfect.”

There are two things which are evidently included in this second precept—“Be thou perfect.” There is, first, the endeavour to abstain from all known evil, whether in thought or word, as well as in action. No one can be accomplishing this command—“Be thou perfect,” unless he deliberately means to forsake, and mortify, and thoroughly eradicate every known sin. And, in the next place, it is evidently involved in this command, that we should seek to obtain all possible excellence—as far as in this inferior condition we possibly can, to reach the excellence of God.

Now if we regard the first of these two obligations, we can see at once how to walk before God tends towards its accomplishment. Quickening all those gracious dispositions which the Holy Spirit has imparted to every regenerate soul, they must necessarily turn us away from all sin. If we love God, how can we fail to please, and honour, and obey, and serve and glorify Him, in this world! By sin we do the opposite of all these things; and therefore to love God, is to be set against every habit of sin.

And if we are grateful to God for His redeeming mercy, and for His Providential care, and for the innumerable blessings that He hath poured out upon us, as His children, can we, when we have that recollection of His goodness, deliberately sin against Him and displease Him? You well know, from your own feelings, that this is impossible; and there have been times, probably, when most of His children here have been so grateful for His love to them, that it seemed as if sin had no power over them,—temptation seemed to have no power to lead them to sin against Him any more. Walk before Him, and that feeling is reproduced and cherished every day.

And then it is equally obvious, that when any person trusts in God, he must feel indisposed to sin against Him. Only realise your absolute dependence upon Him; only recollect that from Him must come every day's tranquility and happiness—all the prosperity you look for in time and in eternity,—that He has your soul and body under His direct controul, and that you are more dependent upon Him than the feeblest creature is upon the strongest; and then think, how is it possible for you to sin against God deliberately! Let faith be strong—let a person trust God exclusively and stedfastly—and sin is wonderfully mortified. Every disposition to displease God seems most heinous and fearful; and out of regard to his own safety, one who trusts exclusively in God would mortify every habit of known evil.

Add to this, the disposition to hope in God for the fulfilment of His promises; and let me ask those who are Christians, to recur to those times in which the promises of God have seemed to them exceedingly valuable, and at the same time perfectly sure in their accomplishment. You at once perceived how high you were raised above the level of your former life—to what an amount of present peace you were introduced—to what a future glory you were travelling; and when you saw how valuable those “exceeding great and precious promises” were, did you wish to forfeit that enjoyment, to en-

danger that possession, to make it questionable whether you should ever share that inheritance, through sinning against God? You felt a fear lest you should lose the very enjoyment of that hope, apart from the possession of the promises: the very hope of realising them was so valuable, that you were afraid of doing anything to displease God, by which that hope should vanish, or even be impaired in your experience. Walk before God, and that hope is daily in exercise, is daily strengthened; and therefore, a new barrier is raised against every kind of transgression.

And who can walk before God, and not have a reverential fear of that awful Being? Who can think of Him in whose presence we are—the holy, just, all-seeing God—the God of boundless power, as well as of boundless purity; who can live before Him who never passes by transgression, who abhors it, and who has rather demanded the death of His own Son than let sin go free,—who can live in His presence, and not be afraid of sinning against Him? Who can recollect all this, and not dread doing that which God so much detests? And therefore, to walk before God is to fear sin. It is to dread its just punishment; it is to dread all those modes by which it is brought into exercise; and therefore, dreading the inflictions of His gracious and righteous Providence, those who walk before God abstain from everything displeasing to Him. And although there must be something to tempt in sin, some present indulgence secured, or else all the world would be holy,—yet still, those who walk before God have all this course of present corrupt indulgence embittered to them; it seems to them hateful, rather than attractive, because it is connected with the just chastening of that God on whom alone they depend.

And again: if we enjoy God, if we have a pleasure in religion, if we feel our hearts bound with happiness because God has made us religious, if every exercise of religion becomes sweet to us, if the sight and society of God's children become attractive to us, if all that God bid us do seems to us delightful, and the way to heaven seems only less attractive than the heaven to which it leads,—who, when he thus rejoices in God, is disposed to sin against Him? Who would forfeit so much joy, for something trifling, questionable and corrupt, followed by stings so sharp and remorse so keen? Who, when he is rejoicing in God, would go to seek the enjoyment of sin? Joy in God is one of the most powerful preservatives against all kinds of transgression against God. Only let us rejoice in Him, and we shall walk uprightly before Him.

And therefore those who walk with God, as they bring these various dispositions into lively exercise, are thus the better able to fulfil one part of the obligation laid upon them by this precept—to abstain from all known habits of sin.

But we are not only commanded to refrain from doing that which is evil—God has given us various faculties, which are meant to be developed as long as we live, and then to rise to greater amplitude, when we stand in His presence; and He means all these faculties to have a healthful and harmonious exercise; and He devises means to bring His children to a healthy state in body and soul; and therefore, He not only bids them to abstain from what is evil, but to attain to all that is excellent, and has said in this second sense, "Walk before Me; and be Thou perfect." Never be satisfied with past attainments, but seek to be something higher, better, and nobler than you may have been. You have the example of God before you; you have the model which Christ has given before you; you have motives of singular power to animate you; the command of God is upon you, and you are going to a heaven, in which all these perfections will be needed; and therefore, while now on earth, be different from that corrupt world, in which you are to "shine as lights." "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect." If we are disciples of Christ and His children, this is what God has commanded us to be and to do.

Now I can easily conceive, that if to walk before God cherishes the various godly dispositions which in themselves constitute a large proportion of the moral excellence, to which He calls His people, so it tends to make them form every habit which is excellent besides. Who can love God and be grateful to

Him—who can trust in Him and hope in His promises—who can reverence and fear God—who can desire His favour and rejoice in Him, and not strive to cultivate every habit by which God is honoured, by which our nature is improved, by which we may avoid everything which separates us from Him, and escape from those suspensions of intimate fellowship with God which are the joy and the honour of a Christian? Those who cherish these dispositions feel that they powerfully tend to strengthen all that is holy, wise, just, and good within them, as well as to repress all their opposites. And hence it becomes so important to us, that we should walk before God.

I know not what effect this command may have upon unconverted persons—I do not know how those in this congregation who have no faith may act upon it—whether they will totally forget it, whether they will corruptly argue against it, or what influence it may have upon them; but I feel sure that it has a response in the conscience, and in the heart of every child of God in this congregation. When you hear God as your God, who has condescended to seek you out when lost and save you by grace, saying to you—“Walk before Me, and be perfect,” you cannot but feel a wish at least rising in your heart, fully to accomplish what God has said. Now let us cherish that wish. We do desire it; every Christian here wishes to bring into exercise the most powerful motives against sin that he can; every one in this congregation that loves and fears God, is very desirous to build up the most insuperable barrier that he can against all possible transgression. He wishes to “be holy,” as God is holy; he wishes to do the things which please God, and no others; he earnestly desires to “be perfect,” as God is perfect; he has not so lightly thought of his Lord’s command—“Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect,” as at once tamely to submit to every evil habit, or to remain careless, without attaining any possible excellence or improvement. Each Christian here wishes for this—only his wishes are too imperfect, too speedily lost, balanced by the many things which come in to tempt the mind; but still every Christian wishes to obey this command, and is aiming at obeying it.

Now God has set before us a powerful mean, by which this may be accomplished: “Walk before Me;” and to a certain extent, every converted person fulfils it, and does walk before God. While others lose sight of Him, a Christian sees Him everywhere; while others try to avoid intercourse with God, a Christian seeks that communion everywhere, and in some degree enjoys and realises it. But at the same time, everyone is conscious of doing far less than he ought, and far less than he might; and it is for the purpose of improving that habit of walking before God that we should consider the command which He has given to His own redeemed and adopted family: “I am the Almighty God; walk before Me.”

Let us, my brethren, while meditating upon this passage of His Word, each one resolve that we will seek to walk more closely with God, for the rest of our lives; and from this day let there be some improvement—let there be a progressive improvement from this day; let us not merely reach a higher level, but constantly advance and strive to walk more before God, as we grow in years, till we reach heaven at last. Let us endeavour to set Him before us in every company, in every scene, in the commencement and prosecution of every duty; in meeting every temptation, in conquering every fault—in a holy Christian life, to set God always before us—as He, in His unmerited compassion, sought us out in our lost estate, and gave us a place in His mansion and His kingdom,—and at least to honour and magnify Him a little in this world.

For this purpose, my brethren, mere resolutions are not sufficient; they soon vanish. When God tells us to “walk before Him,” He evidently implies that we should take proper means for that purpose. Let us, then, begin every day with proper impressions of God. Let us each day take care to hold proper communion with God, before anything else occupies the mind. Let us distinctly yield ourselves to Him, meaning to be governed by Him throughout the day. Such impressions made upon the mind morning after morning, will tend to enable us to walk before God every day of our lives. Seek to find God,

if you have never found Him; and there is this to be remembered, for which you should be very thankful, that every hour spent with God renders it easier for you to find Him another time. It is easier to rejoice in God, when you have rejoiced in Him before, than if you had never rejoiced in Him at all. And all Christians thus acting in the sight of God, and endeavouring to rise above themselves and above the world, have an aid from Him, through which they may walk consistently in this world, improve as they grow in years, escape those rocks on which some shiver their feeble barks, and as they approach the haven of eternal rest hear (as it were) blessed airs from the land of glory to which they are going, which shall cheer and comfort them on their way,—so that their last days may be their best, and they may leave behind them a memory which shall influence those who are dearest to them to follow in the same steps.

THE SECOND OF A COURSE OF LECTURES  
ON THE  
CONNEXION BETWEEN  
NATURAL PHILOSOPHY AND REVEALED RELIGION.

DELIVERED IN VERULAM EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, LAMBETH,  
ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 1, 1847,

Before the Members of the Church of England Young Men's Society,  
(South West London Auxilliary,)

BY THE

REV. HENRY CHRISTMAS, M.A., F.R.S., F.S.A.,  
Minister of the Chapel.

*"And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also."*—Genesis i. 16.

In pursuing the investigations which we commenced in our last Lecture, we shall naturally be led to consider, briefly, the plurality of worlds.

The more we contemplate the wonders of the heavens, the more we perceive how comparatively small a place it is which we ourselves occupy in the scale of creation. We see worlds upon worlds, and systems upon systems, and we are enabled to form some conjectures as to their distances and dimensions, and all these things show us how insignificant is not only the world in which we live, but the system of which we form a part in point of actual magnitude, for were it effaced at once from the map of creation, it would not be missed by the eye that could take in only a small part of that vast scheme.

It is impossible thus to consider our comparative littleness, without having our minds forcibly directed to that which is revealed in the Scriptures concerning the actual importance of that which has taken place here below. We know that it was by "the Word of His power," or as we have already explained it, BY THE SON OF HIS LOVE, that "God created the heavens and the earth." We also know that here have been transacted the most stupendous events, events far greater than that of the very creation itself. For rightly is it observed by the poet,

"'Twas great to make a world from nought,  
'Twas greater to redeem."

And if it was a glorious display of creative energy to call out of nothing the whole of these worlds into existence, it was a still greater effort of Divine power, and a still more magnificent display of Divine love to restore any one portion of that creation, when it had fallen away from its allegiance, and to place it again not only within the sphere of God's favour, but in a better position than it had occupied before.

But there are difficulties which necessarily attend this view of the subject, nor can we be altogether insensible to the manner in which, in all ages, infidels have treated it. They have said, 'Is it possible to believe that for so small and remote a corner of creation, He who had the whole within His power, and to whom, therefore, it could have presented itself in no aspect of vast importance, should not only have designed to restore that which was fallen, but that He should have designed to restore it at so great and costly a sacrifice—that He should have sent His own Son to take upon Himself the nature of the fallen inhabitants of that wretched planet—that the Son of God should have consented, for a certain portion of time to dwell among men—that He should not only have taken upon Himself their nature, but those very infirmities to which they had become subject, in consequence of their fall—that upon Him should rest the consequences of their transgressions, and that

those frailties of the flesh, which were their portion, because they had forsaken and rebelled against their Maker, should become the very lot of Him who had all power, as well as all purity, and who being with the Father before the world began, had received hymns of adoring praise from the whole creation? Is it possible,' they say, 'that we can believe a system that presents to us a theory like this? Is it possible, even with the boldest ideas we can entertain of our own importance, or the loftiest notions of the destiny which we are to fulfil, that we should conceive ourselves to be creatures of such vast moment in the eyes of the Deity, as that a plan like this should have been devised and carried out by Him for our redemption?'

It certainly does appear, at the first sight, that there is a difficulty in answering objections such as these; and we must confess that the *apparent* objects to be gained are small and insignificant when compared with the vast means employed to obtain them. But we must recollect that it is but a small part of the results of that scheme which is made known to us—and we therefore reply to the infidel who brings against the system of redemption an argument derived from the extent of creation and the vastness of space, that we only know the effects of that redemption, so far as it affects ourselves. We know not how widely its blessings may extend. For anything we know to the contrary, there is not a world which has been called into existence that does not derive incalculable advantages from the sacrifice of Christ. We have reason to believe that there is not a corner of creation where the effects of it are not felt, and that for good. And, therefore, we do not consider that such an argument tends to throw any cloud over Divine revelation, nor to shake our faith in the verity of the Christian dispensation.

But, further, if there be a contest going on between the powers of good and of evil, (for we shall not now pause to inquire into the origin of evil itself,)—if there be a contest going on between the powers of good and of evil, those powers must have some ground whereupon the battle between them may be fought. Neither is it of any degree of consequence, compared with the vastness and importance of the interests at stake, *where* that contest shall take place, nor how comparatively insignificant may be the spot on which the strife shall find its arena. The destinies of the most illustrious kingdoms and empires have been decided not with reference to the importance of the spots nor the grandeur of the cities near which their critical battles have been fought. It was not on the most celebrated plains nor near the noblest rivers of the ancient world that those engagements took place, whose issues regulated the fates of the mightiest empires. Neither are we, speaking analogically, to conclude that this, the greatest of all contests, should have the greatest of all fields on which it should be waged.

But even if we grant that it must be so, if we admit that there must be a proper field for so great a fight, still we are far from giving up the point. For we recollect that it is a spiritual and not a physical contest of which we speak, and the idea of comparing spiritual interests with physical magnitude must at once appear to the mind of every reasoning man as being untenable; and we therefore tell the infidel boldly that he displays a total ignorance of the very first principles of philosophy, when he compares spiritual things with material so as to argue from the greatness of the one to the greatness of the other. Spirit is not confined by space nor by duration of time—God himself, the source of all existence and the supreme centre of all being, must necessarily be independent both of space and duration; and any attempt, therefore, to fetter our notions of His operations, by ideas derived from our own limited and dependent nature, must fall at once to the ground.

And yet it was necessary to notice this argument, because it is said to have been the case with more than one individual, that having begun to consider the extent of creation in a Christian, they have terminated by considering it in an infidel point of view. Such is said to have been the case with the eminent Fontenelle. It is asserted that his speculations as to the plurality of worlds terminated, by rendering him to the end of his days a sceptic as to the Christian religion. We have therefore pointed out two grounds upon which any argument deducible against Revelation from the greatness of space, must fall to the ground. We would briefly repeat them. First, we say, it must fall to the ground, because God's operations are not to be measured by space or time as the operations of man are; and, secondly, because we have by analogy no rea-

son whatever for believing that to be necessarily an unworthy field for so great a contest, of which we do not ourselves immediately perceive the fitness.

Let it then be granted,—it would be difficult to deny it, and scarcely possible to disbelieve it,—let it be granted, that when we lift our eyes to the heavens above us, we behold thousands of systems, each system like that of which we form a part, having each its worlds revolving round the bright suns which our eyes behold, inhabited by beings like ourselves, created to show forth the glory, and magnify the greatness of God—what do we learn? We learn, in the first place, something more concerning His grandeur whom we adore, and the wonderful power of Him whom we worship. But we learn more than this. We find, by regarding the world in which we live, that wherever His operations extend they are characterised by beneficence and love; and we have therefore revealed to us a larger sphere for the exercise of those attributes, on a more mighty scale, throughout which, we must believe, they are being ever more and more developed.

The discoveries of modern Astronomy are such indeed as to baffle all powers of imagination. It is impossible to obtain for ourselves or to convey to others any adequate idea of the magnitude of creation as it is now understood. We may express it in words, but those words will not convey to the mind the ideas which they nominally represent. We may speak of millions of miles, and of millions of millions of miles, and of magnitudes corresponding with distances such as these; but, after all, they are but words, and they altogether fail to convey to us any adequate notion of the immensity of those subjects on which they treat.

Let us proceed, then, briefly to show how the mind of man has been led step by step to something like the theory which is now entertained of the grandeur of creation. He began by believing that the world in which we live was the principal part of God's works—that it was the centre of all—and that there was found existing in this world all that which was most important in the Divine economy. He believed that the sun and the moon and the stars were but created to throw a light upon the globe which we inhabit; that they were but intended to be lamps "in the firmament of heaven," "to give light to the earth;" that they had no other object, and served no other purpose in the economy of Heaven.

As man investigated further he was led to modify this opinion, and to believe that so far from the earth on which he lived being the centre of the system, and claiming, therefore, to be the turning point of the whole universe, it was but a part of a system, and that of that system it was *not* the centre. He was led to perceive, that instead of the sun revolving round the earth for the purpose of giving its daily light thereto, the earth was one of a number of planets revolving round the sun; and, therefore, he transferred the centre of the system from the earth on which he lived to the sun which gave him light by day. As the mind of man went on a little further, he was led to believe that the stars were themselves suns, and centres of systems like our own; and thus he perceived that he had taken a still greater step in estimating the magnitude of creation. That which in the first place represented all to him, became itself a secondary part. Then the system of which the part had become secondary became a secondary part in its turn, and formed only one among a countless multitude of systems, many of which may be greater and more splendid than our own. We hear of systems with binary (or double) suns, revolving round each other, and diffusing light of various colours; and the expanse of the midnight heavens, swept by our noble telescopes, shows us a thousand varieties of plan, all proving the boundless power, and wisdom, and benevolence of our Creator.

Nor did the progress of discovery stop here. It has been reserved for still more recent researches to disclose to us that the whole *stellar* system may be understood now as the whole solar system was of old. That stellar system, embracing every star which we can behold with the naked eye, and millions more besides—those remote nebulae which with the ordinary kind of telescope can be perceived, have all one motion; all are revolving round a common centre. How small, compared with this immensity, becomes the grandeur which was once attributed to the earth! Of what small consequence, physically considered, must we be in the vast plains of creation! But we stop not even here; telescopes of the highest power carry our minds and our views

still further, and they point out, in the dim expanse of space, bright cloudy spots, which we may apprehend, and have every reason to believe, are similar stellar systems to that of which our own system forms so inconceivably small a part; and, peradventure, were it possible for us to observe them so as to ascertain their motions, (which appears as yet beyond the power of human ken,) we should be enabled to perceive that they, too, have a motion of their own, and that those vast starry kingdoms have a common centre, and revolve around it, just as the solar system of which our own world is a dependent, revolves, with the rest of the stellar system, round that centre which recent discoveries have assigned to it.

We know that in speaking on subjects like these, although they are no longer topics of conjecture, but have become subjects of proof, we are speaking concerning distances so great and magnitudes so vast that it is impossible for us, as I have already said, either to obtain ourselves, or to convey to others, any adequate idea of their extent. When man believed that the earth on which he lived was the greater part of God's creation, and that he could take the plummet and the measuring line and investigate its extent; when he could in many places ascertain the very depths of the sea; when he could scale the heights of the mountains, and acquire a great degree of knowledge respecting the structure of the world itself; when he could measure the distance of the moon, describe the dimensions of that planet, ascertain exactly the period which it occupied in its revolution round the earth, and take also the period which the earth occupied in its revolution round the sun—when man was able to find out these things, and believed that he had applied the line and the plummet to the greatest portion of creation, and very nearly investigated all that God had done, it seemed to him that he had made himself intellectually great—that he had reflected great glory upon his own powers by being able to assert that God had left so little which he could not comprehend. But as he went on, and found that new abysses were still opening before him—that new wonders were still making themselves known to him—that, in fine, when he thought he had got nearly to the end he had reached only the beginning, when he thought he had penetrated to the recesses of the temple he was standing only on its threshold—every new discovery tended to expand his ideas of the Divine greatness, and to show him how mean and how contemptible, if regarded with reference to that greatness, he himself was. He did not then wonder that the sacred writers should exclaim, “Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?” He marvelled no longer at the awful conceptions of the power and majesty of the ALL HOLY ONE which were felt by those who were inspired; and who were thus permitted to behold under a nearer aspect the glories of His grace. Nor did he wonder when that God, speaking to one of His most eminent servants, declared, “Thou canst not see My face and live.” And yet, oh! wonder of wonders! that very individual was permitted to hold communion with the Almighty One, while He passed before him and proclaimed His name—a name conveying to us the chief attribute of the Divine character—“The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” And thus shall we ever find that the more we approach towards an adequate knowledge of the greatness of creation, and, therefore, of the power of Him by whom all things were made, the more shall we at the same time approach towards an adequate conception of His love and His holiness, the attributes by which He is pleased, so to speak, especially to recommend Himself to us.

But we must descend from these vast fields of speculation a little nearer home, and come to that part of creation which once, indeed, was supposed to be all that it had to exhibit—we must come once more to contemplate the system of which we form a part; and we shall now consider it with reference to the relation existing between the earth on which we live and that great body which is the centre of our system.

We are taught by the deductions of astronomical science, that the earth by its revolution round the sun causes the succession and changes of the seasons, and by its revolution round its own axis causes the vicissitudes of day and night. Into the minutiae of these revolutions we are not now called particularly to inquire; we refer to them on account of two great miracles which are recorded in Scripture to have taken place, and which cannot be contemplated



by the scientific mind without a great deal of interest and curiosity. One of these miracles, and the more remarkable, is that which took place by the command of Joshua, when the sun stood still in order that the people of the Lord might have more time to pursue after their enemies. You will find the miracle recorded in the book of Joshua, in the tenth chapter, and at the twelfth and thirteenth verses: "Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel; and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves of their enemies."

Now there are three things to be considered with reference to this miracle. The first is, the actual truth of the statement; the second is, the manner in which the miracle was accomplished; and the third is, the mode in which the history of the miracle is related.

First, then, we will speak of the actual truth of the statement. And it is matter of great importance for us to observe, (as we remarked in the former lecture,) that although as Christians, we are contented to rest our faith on that which is affirmed in the Old Testament, and confirmed by Christ in the New, still it is satisfactory to know that those who could have had no means of access to the Divine writings, were of old acquainted with the fact. We find that mythologically, the circumstance is related, and there is not a system of belief of which astronomical observations have formed a part, in which this "long day" has not been noticed, a day preeminently long above the rest of days. In all cases the belief appears to have been derived from this circumstance, and probably also derived in all cases from a tolerably correct version of it. This is a matter of importance to us, because wherever we find universal tradition corroborating the statements of Divine truth, we have not only an independent witness, but we have that which may be called an almost unerring testimony. We have it from independent, and we have it too from adverse sources. It comes to us from that which is evil, even though it supports that which is good.

Finding, then, that tradition as well as Revelation tell us that this event took place; finding also, that astronomical observations give us reason to believe that it was an event very early known and understood; we shall proceed to consider how the miracle occurred. Joshua, we find, here speaks to the sun and says, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou moon, in the valley of Ajalon." We must mingle very much the two portions of our remarks upon this topic, because the manner in which the miracle is related throws light upon the manner in which it was performed.

"Sun, stand thou still." In the original, it is "Sun, be thou dumb," *withhold thy influence*, while over Gibeon, and thou moon over the valley of Ajalon. You will observe, that by this phraseology an apparent inconsistency is removed. The apparent inconsistency to which we refer, is the difficulty of reconciling that which we know by science and research, with that which is here revealed to us in the Word of God. The translated words of Joshua are, "Sun, stand thou still," whereas the scientific command according to our ideas, would have been, "*Earth*, stand thou still." But there are two reasons for this. One reason will at once suggest itself to the enquiring mind: namely, that the command was not addressed to the sun only, but to the sun and moon jointly. "Sun, stand thou still," therefore, or, "Sun, withhold thine influence," whichever phrase may be more idiomatic, would have the effect of restraining the operation both of *earth* and moon, and keeping them in their relative position; and thus we can readily understand why the words were uttered in this form, "Sun, be thou dumb," or, "Sun, withhold thou thine influence," rather than, *Earth*, stand thou still.

And there is another reason, to which we have just alluded, and not more; and that is, that it would be more intelligible to those to whom the words were addressed. For we must remember that the principal cause for working this miracle was to show the power of God against an idolatrous nation, against a nation whose theology was peculiarly a sun and star worship. The Amorites were preeminently adorers of the heavenly bodies; and in order to show them how great was the power of the true God against those beings whom they worshipped, we find Joshua uttering his command to the very objects of their idolatry, and saying—"Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou

moon, in the valley of Ajalon." And however more strictly correct the words would have appeared to us, "*Earth, stand thou still,*" yet they would have failed to convey the same meaning to the Jews or to those who were overcome by their result. Again, the suspension of a general planetary law would plainly affect the moon as well as the sun, and it would appear, therefore, as though Joshua had been well acquainted with this fact. For why did he command the *Moon* to stand still? Not surely because the Israelites wanted the moon's light in following their adversaries to extermination—doubtless, the light of the sun would have been sufficient for that purpose—but he did so because he would show the Amorites that the God of Israel was supreme over one luminary as over the other; and because in future ages it might be seen that the Divine Creator knew the nature and plan of His own works.

Then, how was this miracle performed? It is stated that there was a great shower of stones, and that by means of this great shower of stones many of the enemies of the children of Israel were slain; so that it is said—"more were those who were destroyed by the stones than those that were slain with the sword:" and it has been observed by some, that inasmuch as the effect of the sudden cessation of the earth's motion would be a stoppage of its centrifugal force, and at the same time that force being necessarily by the laws of matter and motion confined to that which was lying loose upon its surface, it would dislodge all stones which might be lying on the surface of the earth, and hurl them into the air, and would thus necessarily produce a shower of stones. This is a very ingenious argument, but one which is altogether inapplicable to the case. First, it is inapplicable to the narrative, which does not say that there was a great shower of stones over all the earth, by which houses were thrown down and cities were overthrown and armies destroyed, and from which the Israelites were miraculously preserved, but simply that there was a great shower of stones *against the Amorites*, and that this had so great an effect upon them that there were more destroyed thereby than were slain by the sword. And if it is said that we have here our choice between a variety of miracles, we must necessarily take that which involves the least violation of the ordinary laws of nature, and believe, therefore, that the shower of stones which is spoken of was another and a separate miracle wrought by the hand of the Lord in favour of His own people. For observe, that if we do not do this, and if we believe the shower of stones to have resulted, as those writers do to whom we allude, from the sudden stoppage of the earth's motion, we must first believe that God wrought the miracle of thus suspending the motion of the earth, and then that He wrought another and separate miracle in keeping all things in their places except a certain quantity of stones which were discharged against the enemies of the Israelites—a miracle which appears much more contrary to the whole tenor of God's usual course of action, than to suppose that He first wrought the single miracle of suspending the influence of the sun and of the moon, and afterwards an additional wonder for His people by a shower of stones against their enemies.

But though it is said—"Sun, stand thou still," it does not necessarily mean that this influence was *suddenly* withdrawn. All we are told is, that the sun "*hasted not to go down for a whole day.*" The sun slackened its apparent motion; or we may say the earth slackened, at the Divine command, its actual motion; and thus, though there would be an apparent cessation of the motion of the sun, it would be but gradually stayed, and stayed only for such a period, as in the exercise of His Divine wisdom God thought fit to permit. But we must observe that the term—"Be thou dumb," or withhold thine influence, is one which is peculiarly applicable. 'It is a form of expression to be found not only in the Hebrew language, but in other idioms; and we have an instance of this in one of the most sublime poets, who, whether he copied from the Divine writings, or whether it struck his own mind, speaks of the sun as being silent, when referring to those places where the light of the sun is not seen. If, then, we understand that the earth did stay its motion in obedience to the command—"Sun, stand thou still," or withdraw thine influence; that that motion was gradually slackened for the period during which the miracle was continued, and then that it continued at the rate at which it had gone on before, we shall see an easy mode of understanding how the miracle was performed, and we shall see the entire applicability, both spiritually and philosophically, of the words which were spoken. We see their spiritual

applicability inasmuch as they pointed out to those who were fighting against the people of Israel that the Lord fought against their gods, and displayed the power of His own hands, and the authority delegated to His own servants, even against the objects of their idolatrous worship ; while at the same time, we see their entire consistency even with the most modern doctrines of science, as used on the occasion in question—"Sun, be thou still upon Gibeon," or Sun, hold thou thine influence over Gibeon, "and thou, Moon, over the valley of Ajalon." And we see, also, that had the command been addressed to the earth, it would have been directly inapplicable to the moon, while it would not have conveyed the same meaning or the same truth to those against whom the miracle was directed.

And here it is necessary to observe, that no command which is misunderstood by those to whom it is addressed, can ever be expected to produce its intended results. If we know that men have a certain form of speech, whether it be philosophically correct, or not, we must use words in the sense, and conveying the ideas which they attach to them ; or, if we do not, we shall be commanding one thing, and they will be doing another ; we shall be declaring one fact, and they will be believing another. And this principle is as necessary to be remembered with reference to God's commands to men, and exists as much in its applicability to them, as it does with reference to men's commands among their brethren.

There is another miracle of the same kind, and one which is deserving of our consideration, although much which we have said with reference to this greater miracle, applies also to that of the sun-dial of Ahaz. We are informed, that when king Hezekiah was sick and about to die, the Lord was pleased, in answer to his supplication, to add to his life ; and as a sign that he should not die on that occasion, Isaiah the prophet commanded that the shadow should go back upon the sun-dial of Ahaz ten degrees ; that is, that the day should be brought back by the amount of that ten degrees. There is, indeed, one point in which this miracle appears to be even greater than that of Joshua, for whereas Joshua only commanded the sun to stand still, while the armies of the Lord fought against their adversaries, it would seem in this case as though the work of creation had been, so to speak, undone—as though the earth had been turned back upon her axis in order to testify the Lord's favour towards one of His servants ; so that the miracle appears to be greater in itself and more wonderful in proportion to the less amount of cause for its exhibition. But so far as the miracle is concerned, we have only to notice that what has been declared concerning one, may be declared also as to the other, namely, that with reference to the mode of its accomplishment there is nothing said, against which a philosophical mind can object. In this latter case, indeed, the prophet speaks neither to the sun nor to the earth, but he merely says that the shadow shall go back ten degrees upon the sun-dial of Ahaz. Now it certainly may have been the case, that the shadow was caused to go back without the sun ceasing his influence, or the earth its motion. This, we say, may possibly have been the case ; and we are induced thus to hint at its possibility, because we do not find in the records of profane history any mention of such a prolongation of time, as that which is mentioned in reference to the miracle of Joshua. Besides which, as the miracle specifies a particular sun-dial, and claims no other object than the satisfaction of Hezekiah's mind by giving him "a sign," it may be held more in accordance with the importance of the case, that the miracle should have been wrought upon the *sun-dial*, and not upon the sun. Still the case *may* have been otherwise ; there may have been as much a prolongation of the day, as much a returning of the earth back upon its axis, as there was a relaxation of the sun's influence in the case of Joshua.

We have observed, that when Joshua issued this command to the sun, and the result of this command was the destruction of the enemies of the children of Israel, there was a peculiar spiritual applicability in it, inasmuch as Joshua, the servant of the Lord, commands the very gods of the heathen to become instrumental in the destruction of their own worshippers. Now we might extend the remark to that which must ever be the case in all instances of idolatry, whether it be the idolatry of outward worship, or the deeper idolatry of the heart—that that which we set up as a god, and to which we pay the devotion which should be paid only to the Lord of life and glory, will eventu-

ally be made instrumental to our own spiritual destruction, just as the gods of the heathen worship were in this instance made instrumental to their temporal destruction. And we cannot close the lecture, without pointing out a few of the circumstances connected with this ancient system of idolatry, this star worship, of which we find instances in the case before us. One of the greatest of the Jewish Rabbis, Maimonides, speaks of its antiquity. At a very early period did men begin to believe, that the stars which they beheld above them were worlds; that if not suns, they were at least worlds like that in which we live; and more especially the shepherds living in the vast plains of Babylon, those Chaldeans, who afterwards astonished the age by the greatness of their discoveries, were led to believe, that each of those bright orbs above us was presided over by a spirit of its own; that this spirit, under the Divine direction, guided them in their courses, and that they took an active part in the affairs of mankind.

Wonderfully beautiful is the way in which Atherstone, in his "Fall of Nineveh," a poem of the highest order, speaks of this star worship. The prayer of the Babylonian priest, Bolesis, to the stars, commences thus:—

"Look down upon us from your spheres of light,  
Bright ministers of the Invisible;  
Before whose dread supremacy weak man  
May not appear; for what are we—earth-worms—  
That the All Holy One to us should stoop  
From the pure sanctuary where HE dwells,  
Thron'd in eternal light? But ye His face  
Behold, and in His presence stand, and His  
Commands obey. Saturn and mighty Sol,  
Though absent now beyond the ends of Earth,  
Yet hearing human prayer—great Jupiter,  
Venus, and Mars, and Mercury—oh! hear!  
Interpreters divine! and for your priest  
Draw the dread veil that shades the days to come,

They believed that the lives of men, the fall of empires, and the rise of kingdoms, that all the great and important transactions among mankind were decided and regulated according to the ruling powers of those spirits above us; and they were led, therefore, to look up to those spirits with something like a feeling of idolatrous worship in the first place, and afterwards with a worship which became altogether so. And admirably does Maimonides describe the gradual effect of this perversion of worship. He shows how they first beheld these stars moving in their orbits, and believing them to be under the guidance of those mighty spirits, they lifted up their eyes thereto with adoration; that they then contrived in their own hearts forms by which to represent those spirits which governed the stars above them; and that then, regarding those spirits as exercising so great an influence among men, they offered their prayers to them that evil might be averted, and their praises for good which had been done; and thus it was that a system of idolatry which had its rise in a glorious and interesting form of imagination became afterwards a mere scheme of superstition; and then so far from blending with the reverence which they paid these objects, that which was due to the one Supreme, under whose guidance they at first believed these spirits were acting, they continued their worship to the stars themselves, and made them the supreme objects of their adoration. If they did this with respect to the stars, much more is it likely that they would do so as to the moon, and still more to the sun; and thus from worshipping the spirits which governed them, they gradually fell to worshipping the bodies themselves; just as the Egyptians of old first worshipped certain symbols, afterwards consecrated certain animals which corresponded with those symbols, and then at last, fell to worshipping the animals themselves. And so it is with every kind of idolatry, however poetical or glorious may be the ideas in which it takes its origin; where any deviation from truth is admitted, it must, and ever will lead man further and further every step, till at last it plunges him into the grossest forms of superstition and idolatry.

Now if we look over the Old Testament, and observe what is there related concerning the objects of worship of the Egyptians, the Syrians, the Assyrians, the Chaldeans and the Canaanites, we find that the chief part of their worship was of an astronomical character. Thus we read of the worship of a Moloch, representing the sun, and that of Ashtaroth representing the moon. Baal,

again, represents the sun ; the star Remphan, so far as we are able to ascertain it, was but the planet Saturn ; and we may trace, step by step, almost the whole of their worship to an astronomical source. We find the same with regard to the Egyptians. We find Osiris representing the sun, and Isis the moon, and the stars having their peculiar representatives among the idols of the day. In like manner we find it in all other ancient forms of idolatry ; and even in the comparatively later system which prevailed among our own ancestors, we find sun worship and moon worship conspicuous, and the first and second days of the week distinguished by the worship on those days appointed to be paid to these idols.

But while we have been led, by the blessing of God, out of this darkness, into "the marvellous light of the Gospel," while we have been enabled to understand that "the Lord our God is one Lord," and to regard all these His wonderful works, as but proofs of His power and manifestations of His love, we are not therefore free from idolatry. We do not bow down before the glorious sun that rolls over us, nor before the moon that enlightens us by night, but alas ! we are not free from the sin of bowing down to idols of our own, and erecting gods within our hearts, as contrary to the Spirit of truth as those which our ancestors worshipped of old. How necessary is it that we should examine ourselves, and see that our hearts are as pure from idolatry, as our creed is from the acknowledgment of false deities ! We see the necessity there is for us to be as uncompromising in casting away "to the moles and to the bats," the idols we set up within the shrines of our affections, as it was necessary for them to be, who were brought from the darkness of idolatry, in casting away "their dumb idols, and turning to the living God." This is absolutely necessary for our welfare here, as well as for our welfare hereafter. For, as we before observed, we shall find, that by an inevitable law, a law resulting from the operation of God's power in every instance, as, indeed, all laws are, if we will worship that which He hath commanded not to be worshipped, instead of Himself, who is alone worthy to be the object of our supreme love and adoration, He will make those very objects the means of our spiritual destruction, and cause us "to be ashamed of the oaks which we have planted, and be confounded for the gardens that we have chosen." For thus saith the Lord, by His servant Isaiah—"They shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water."

## NOAH'S FAMILY IN THE ARK.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. JOHN CUMMING, D.D.

PREACHED IN EXETER HALL, STRAND,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 28, 1847.

*"And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark."—Genesis vii. 1.*

I HAVE selected this text, because it seems to suggest some instructions connected with the subject which is especially to be brought before you this day. That subject (as you are aware) is the importance and the duty of the Christian education of the young; and, after unfolding the import of the text itself, I mean to turn your attention, first, to the great duty that devolves on the father, or on him that occupies the father's place—the guardian of the young; and next, to the great benefits, both for this world and that which is to come, which a Christian education is fitted to produce.

I will now notice some of the thoughts that start from the very expressive and beautiful symbol, of which the historical fact here recorded is made the pedestal. We are told, in the epistle to the Hebrews, that it was "by faith" that "Noah prepared the ark, to the saving of himself and household;" and we are told, by the apostle Peter, that spiritual "baptism," the baptism of the Holy Spirit, is connected in some way with the symbol that is here employed in the book of Genesis.

The personage here named is—"Noah." The meaning of the word is, "rest," or "repose;" and as such, we believe, that Noah is an expressive symbol, or at least illustrative to this extent, of Him who is the only rest of His believing people. Our Lord himself says—"Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" and He is frequently spoken of in Scripture as the "*Noah*" of His people—that is, the rest of His people. Now whether the one was designed to be a type of the other, I cannot say; but certainly, the meaning of the one is only an adequate expression for the excellence, perfection, and glory of the other. There is but one *Noah* in the whole universe of God—the Lord Jesus Christ; there is but one spot, from the nadir up to the very zenith, which can constitute the rest of an immortal soul, or be a foundation for the superstructure of our hopes and prospects for eternity. All things change, but Christ. Opinions, politics, parties, preferences, prejudices—all are undergoing a perpetual change; and in the present day there seems to be that social ferment which precedes new combinations—that disintegration of the atoms that constitute society which always takes place prior to new crystallization. But amidst the changes of empires, the fall of dynasties, the war of parties, the collision of sentiments, One remains—the great central column of the universe, against which we may lean and feel at ease—our Noah, our rest, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We read that Noah was not only a "rest," as his name denotes, but "a preacher of righteousness." Noah preached the righteousness of Christ—Christ preaches His own; Noah's language was, "Behold the Lamb of God,"—Christ's language is, "I that speak unto thee am He." Noah preached that only righteousness which has been, and ever will be, the only mode of a sinner's acceptance before God; and hence the righteousness which Noah preached and which Christ performed, is the righteousness in which the antediluvians trusted, in which Abraham and the patriarchs gloried, which the Levitical

shadows and sacrifices typified, which prophets foretold, which Christ completed, which evangelists recorded, which apostles proclaimed, and which martyrs sealed with their blood at the stake. There have never been two ways of acceptance before God, or two religions. There is and has been but one. It was developed from Paradise to Calvary, but still the same. The antediluvian was the seed; the patriarchal was the stem, the Levitical was the bud—the Christian is the full-grown and fragrant and beauteous blossom. It is the perfection only of all the preceding; hence Christianity is not a new religion, but the old religion—and Protestantism is only Christianity in conflict with the errors that have overlaid it, and the superstitions that have been encrusted upon it.

I may notice, as another feature here, that while Noah was “a preacher of righteousness,” all his warnings were despised by the generation to whom he addressed them. What does this teach us? That truth never has been popular in the world. It is not only a world of sin, but a world of lies; and man has ever loved the lie, which speaks to him peace—and he has ever hated the truth, that rebukes his sins and proclaims the reality of his condition. Never was truth preached in the world more faithfully or more affectionately than Jesus preached it; and never did truth meet with a more stern or terrible rejection. The fact is, that man, till he is taught by the Spirit of God, cannot stand the truth about himself; for to hear the whole truth, and feel it, about his state by sin, would make a man—must make a man—either commit suicide, or believe in Christ Jesus. I say, to hear the whole truth about his state, and to feel that truth in its condemning effects, must either drive a man to the very brink of despair, or it must draw him unto Him who puts an end to all despair, by forgiving all sin. When Noah preached to the world the judgments that were ready to overwhelm it, I have no doubt that it was demonstrated to the entire satisfaction of all the scientific institutes of the antediluvian world, that the flood was an impossibility and an absurdity; I have no doubt that when Noah predicted its advent, the astronomers of that day proved to absolute demonstration, that no planetary force could be exerted adequate to move the ocean from its oozy bed, and to make it overflow the highest mountains of the earth; I have no doubt that the geologists of that day argued, that the lower strata of the earth consisted of fire, rather than of water; and I have as little doubt that the *Charivari* and newspaper caricaturists of that day mocked the fanatic old man for telling them that the flood was about to overflow the world, and sweep them from the face of the earth. But the great fact which upset all theories came in the bursting earth, and the opening firmament of heaven, and the flood that swept away the demonstrations, and the demonstrators with them. So, my dear friends, will it be again. We are told that in the last days “there shall be scoffers, walking after their own lusts;” and they shall say—“Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the creation of the world;” not knowing that “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” And “as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be when the Son of Man cometh; men shall be eating, and drinking, and marrying, and giving in marriage,” even as they were when the flood came.

So much, then, for the person here spoken of.

Let me now notice, in the second place, the object—the ark. You are aware that there are two things which bear the same name—the ark in which Noah and his family floated to Ararat, and the ark of the testimony, which was kept in the holy place and covered with the mercy-seat. These are two very different things. The ark here signified is the wooden vessel, constructed after the prescription of God, which carried Noah and his family across the waters, and landed them on Ararat. I look upon the ark here, not as some have done, as the type and the symbol of the Saviour—Noah was that,—but I look upon the ark as the type and symbol of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean by that church, not any visible communion upon earth, but the company of all redeemed and true believers. In other words, I look upon it as the symbol of the true church, which we estimate not by the size of its cathedrals, or the height of its spires, or the number of its baptisms; but by its likeness to God, and conformity to the image of Jesus. Hence I have always felt it an objection to the Tractarian divines, that they are very low churchmen; we are rightly and properly the true high churchmen. I believe that Dr. Watts shows in many of his

hymns; that he was a far higher churchman than Mr. Keble or Mr. Williams, who sing the glories and the excellencies of what they call the church. The church of the Tractarian is a church limited by the height of the spire of the cathedral; the church of the Christian is a church which stretches beyond the stars. Their church is one which includes Italy and Austria, and excludes Scotland and Holland, and a large portion of America; our church is one which includes people of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, whose attributes stretch beyond the firmament, and repose amid the effulgence of the throne of God. Hence Dr. Watts shows himself, Congregationalist as he was, to be a true churchman, when he sings:—

“ I love Thy kingdom, Lord,  
The house of Thine abode,  
The Church our bless'd Redeemer bought,  
With His own precious blood.

I love Thy Church, O God;  
Her walls before Thee stand,  
Dear as the apple of Thine eye,  
And graven on Thy hand.

Beyond my highest joy  
I prize her heavenly ways—  
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,  
Her hymns of love and praise.”

It is true, we cannot find our idea of the church satisfied with any visible Christian institution upon earth. Hence our churchmanship rises far above popes, and prelates, and presbyters—we can find the great idea defined only in the Word of God, and the lofty and glorious reality embodied in the presence of the throne of God himself. Hence I have thought, that even one single sound from David's lyre, although that sound comes through the rugged Scottish version—

“ Upon the hills of holiness  
God His foundation sets;  
God more than Jacob's dwellings all  
Delights in Zion's gates :”—

has more true churchmanship than all Mr. Keble's drivelling poetry about “ holy mother.” We are churchmen—high churchmen; the Tractarians are mere schismatics, setting up a human altar against the Divine one.

Into this Ark we invite you, as Noah invited the antediluvians into his. To come by baptism into the visible church, is unquestionably a duty; but to invite you to come into this national or that national, or this congregational or that Wesleyan communion, is not to invite you into this ark. The invitation we address to you all, is to come into that true church, members of which are in every communion upon earth; the Head of which is Christ; the bonds, the ties, the links of which are ties of living and imperishable love; the safety of which is guaranteed by the oath and made real by the overshadowing attributes of Deity; and the end and the destiny of which is so sure that no convulsion can arrest it, no change retard it. This church must last and live, whilst there is a God to be worshipped, throughout the ages of eternity.

Believing, then, that this is the true idea of the ark, let me notice, in the next place, that the ark which Noah built, and built after the prescription of God, had (we are told) but one door in it; and Noah stood at that door, and invited all that would to come in. You ask me, then, what is that door? It is not baptism; that cannot be proved. It is not any right prescription or position in this world; that cannot be proved. But we have One proclaiming himself to be the only Door to the sheepfold—the only avenue of access to the number of the saved: “ I am the Door; whoso entereth by Me shall find pasture.” Hence the title of admission into this true church of the redeemed is not any visible ceremony; nor is it any earthly name, however valued, esteemed and cherished it may be; nor is it in the power of any priest, nor is it in virtue of any rite; but it is simply the reception of, or belief in, the Lord Jesus Christ, as God's way to us, and our way exclusively to Him;—and that minister of the Gospel who cannot point out this door without obstructing and narrowing it, or who cannot stand before it and invite the people in without casting his own shadow on it, is a minister of the Gospel who is not true to all the requirements and responsibilities of his office; and that sermon, therefore, seems to me the most useful, not which pleases the ear with its music, but which casts the greatest



light and the least shadow upon Christ, the only door of access to the company of the saved.

We read that this ark, which was constructed after the prescription of God, had not only a door, but we are also told that it had "a window;" and it is remarkable that it had but one window—for God himself said, "A window shalt thou make in it;" and the height and breadth of that window God himself laid down. Now what a window is to that ark, it is not surely straining our interpretation if I presume, the ministry and sacraments and ordinances of the church are to that church. What, then, would you have said, was the best window that Noah could have had in the ark? Surely not the most beautiful one—not the one that was most richly and most exquisitely stained; but the window that would subserve the great purposes which he had in view, the window that admitted with the least obstruction the light of heaven to the inmates. It is so, then, with the ministry and the ordinances of the church of Christ. That is the best ministry which is the purest medium of light; the best light is not the "dim religious," but the bright religious light; and those sacraments seem to me the most scriptural and the most apostolical, which are administered, so as not to take the place of Christ, and dislodge Him, but which become the transparent and lucid media, through which the beams of heaven dawn upon the earth, and the light of God's truth finds the most ready access into the depths of man's heart.

I read also, in the next place, that while the ark had its door and its window, it had in it also several compartments; and in reading over the portion which describes it at your leisure, you will find that it was so. These compartments, we read, were divided by partitions. Is there not in this something like a symbol—if not a description—of the state of Christ's church? Those true believers who compose it may be found in every communion; and each has a preference, it may be, distinct from his brother's. These distinctions may be sinful—but they are facts; these differences may be expedient, or they may not; they may be necessary and unavoidable, or they may be criminal; but here they are. Men do not yet see eye to eye: whether they shall ever see all things exactly the same, is a question I cannot answer; but here there is a palpable fact, that if there were different chambers in the ark, there was but one door to admit them all, and one window to give light to them all. May it not be so in Christ's church?—nay, it is so,—that whatever be the Christian party, or denomination, (and one compartment may be ampler and brighter than another to which you belong,) there is but one door of admission to the true church; there is but one window to let light into it; and that sect seems to me to depart furthest from the Gospel, that says—'You shall not belong to us, unless you first enter through Cranmer, or through Wesley, or through Knox, and then through Christ;' but that church seems to me to approach nearest to the apostolic model, that proclaims and writes (as it were) on its very threshold—'There is nothing that constitutes your title to admission, but your sense of your peril without, and your desire to be saved solely through His precious blood.'

You will notice, in the next place, that in this ark the three great fathers of the human family met together: Shem, the great father of Asia, Japhet of Europe, and Ham of Africa,—America being made up of sections taken from each. How delightful the anticipation, that their children shall meet again in Christ, their common Saviour, and in the true ark, their common church; and how truly should we endeavour to approximate to this predestined state in all our arrangements upon earth! How very unlike this is a portion of the church of America, where the poor black man, because he has got a darker shade upon his face, is not allowed to approach the same table or to sit in the same pew with the white man! Our American friends proclaim themselves to be specimens of the free—the models of liberty throughout the world. Certainly they may be so in theory; but if this be true, (as it is certainly in the Southern States,) they are not so in practice; and I hope there never will be a Christian congregation within the length and breadth of Great Britain, in which the black shall be severed by force from the white, the male from the female, the bond from the free, the barbarian from the civilised, where all are "one in Christ Jesus."

I notice, in the next place, that all within the ark, and they alone, were saved. No doubt there were stronger ships built than the ark, and yet they all perished

No doubt, tested by strict mathematical or hydrostatic principles, the ark was a very defective vessel ; I have no doubt scientific men prophesied that it would founder in the first wave that rolled ; and I have no doubt that when Noah entered the ark, without any knowledge of the stars, and without any chart or compass, or means of navigating it, they predicted that if his prophecy became true, and the flood came, those magnificent war vessels would float unscathed to the remotest shores, and that the miserable shell which Noah called the ark would perish in the first gale. But the mightiest navies foundered before the overwhelming flood ; and the very shell constructed by Noah, who was neither shipwright nor carpenter, survived ;—teaching us the lesson, that the element of safety is not the strength of human institutions, but the presence and blessing of God upon the weakest.

Kings and nobles, the highest, the noblest, the richest, and the greatest outside the ark perished ; they only inside were safe. And so it must be still. The church that is to last for ever is not the most gorgeous in its forms, or the richest in its possessions ; and they that trust to the antiquity, or the greatness, or the learning, or the resources of the church, as the great means of their safety in the approaching storms, imitate the conduct of those who trusted to their war-ships, and rejected the safety provided in the ark of Noah. Your safety, my dear friends, is not in your belonging to a church the most apostolic, nor is it in your being baptised after a *formula* the most scriptural ; but the only church, to belong to which is to be a churchman indeed, and a christian too, is that church composed of those who have “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,” and have fled to Christ, as the only safety and refuge of sinners.

In the next place, I may add, many assisted in building the ark of Noah who perished themselves. It is not likely that Noah could have built the whole ark in the time prescribed. It is found by calculation, that Noah's ark, by measurement, would be as large as several, I believe, of the largest ships of war, and able to carry as much as they would be able to carry, crews and all. It is quite plain, therefore, that Noah could not have built it all himself. I have no doubt that he was assisted, by many, for the pay they received, not because of any sympathy they felt. Many of the shibboleths that are sounded loudest in the age in which we live, are shibboleths that do not come from zeal for the cause of Christ, but from zeal for men's own advantage. Every time you hear—“The church, the church of the Lord are we,” or every time you hear, “The church is in danger,” or “The chapel is in peril,” do not always believe that these proceed from the purest and the loftiest motives. Many side with the church, on the one hand, or with dissent, upon the other, not from heartfelt preference, but from expedience and mercenary ends. And on the other hand, my dear friends, very many may assist in extending the cause of Christ on the earth, who shall not be saved by it. It is a very solemn thing, that there will be ministers who shall form and build up churches for eternity, who shall perish themselves ; it is a very solemn thought, that many shall contribute to build schools, and to circulate Bibles, and to extend missions, out of benevolent motives—not out of Christian ones, because they are not Christians themselves. And therefore, when we give to the cause of Christ, let us always precede that gift by this first and chiefest question—“Do I belong to Christ myself? Am I a Christian myself?” He only who is a Christian can give truly to the extension of Christ's cause ; and the little that he gives, being the most that he can spare, will be blessed by Him who gave him grace to give it.

Let me also notice the striking fact, that the same wave which raised the ark of Noah to the sky, overwhelmed the towers and the citadels of the earth. The same Gospel that is “a savour of life unto life” to many, is “the savour of death unto death” to others. It is a great law in God's providence, just as it is a law in God's grace, that what is death to the unbeliever is salvation to the child of God ; the same sermon that carries quickening hopes into one heart, carries a hardening process into a second ; the same tribulation that is sanctified to one man, hardens a second man ; the same wave that carried Noah nearer to his God, overwhelmed those that were without the ark in irresistible destruction ; the same lightning flash that rent the rocks and citadels of the world, only shone upon the surging waters before Noah, and illuminated his troubled pathway, till he rested finally upon Ararat. Let us, then, my dear friends, pray, that the Gospel we hear may be made a blessing to us, not a

calamity—that the truth we hear may be the means of our acquittal, not the cause of our condemnation, at the judgment-seat of Christ.

Having noticed, then, these lessons that flow from a consideration of Noah and the ark, let me notice, in the next place, that you and your children are invited into it, just as Noah and his children, and all his family, were invited into the ark.

There is nothing, my dear friends, to be done now, but simply to accept what has been done for us. The great misapprehension of many is, that they have something to do, or something to suffer, before they can be justified. Now the revelation of the Gospel of Christ is, that all has been done that God required to be done—all suffered that the law demanded to be suffered,—and that now we have only to repose upon that sacrifice, and rest upon that righteousness, and be everlastingly saved; and what you are called upon to do, is just what Noah was called upon to do—to bring not only yourselves, but your children, to Christ, and just as you are.

Has any one in this assembly a prodigal son? Bring him upon your prayers to the throne of grace; beseech Him in whose hands are all hearts, to change that heart; and that prodigal will yet gratify your spirits, by presenting the spectacle of one prostrate at his Father's footstool, and that Father falling on his neck, and kissing him, and bidding him welcome home. Have you infants? Bring them into the ark also; let these flowers be presented before "the Sun of Righteousness;" let these babes be dedicated to Christ, and be taught to feel that their safety is to be within the ark—their peril to be out of it.

There is no safety for you or for your children anywhere but in the true church of the redeemed, that is washed in the blood and arrayed in the righteousness of Jesus. This one thought should absorb or annihilate every other consideration. Be not anxious so much whether your offspring shall be churchmen or dissenters, as whether they shall be Christians. Bring them first to Christ, and then they will not go to a wrong church; make them first acquainted with the excellencies of the Saviour, and then they will prefer the communion that reflects His glory most brightly, and makes known His Gospel most faithfully; bring your children first to the ark, and then let them determine at their leisure into which chamber or partition of the ark they shall prefer permanently to dwell,—recollecting that if we are in the true ark there is but one door for admission, but one window to enlighten them, as there is but one God to protect them, and one mountain more glorious than Ararat, on which they shall rest and dwell for ever.

But it may be asked, 'What is to become of those children who are not so privileged as Noah's, in having a father to bring them to Christ, and into the true ark?' My dear friends, this is a very solemn and a very important and personal question. Your babes, I trust, as Christian fathers, you initiate in the knowledge and appreciation of the Gospel of Christ; these, I believe and hope, you pray for, and set an example attractive for its beauty, and give instructions that will be profitable by their purity. 'But what,' you ask, 'is to become of children, (and in the neighbourhood of Covent-garden and Drury-lane we might select not hundreds, but thousands,) who either have no father at all, or have a father who is rather a calamity and a curse, than a blessing and a benefactor to them?' I hold, that in such a case a Christian church is the sponsor for such outcast ones; I hold, that the duty—nay, not the duty, but the privilege—devolves upon you of "suffering such little ones to come unto Jesus." Those children that wander in our streets, who are our future house-breakers, the inmates of our prisons for the next twenty years, and the exiles to Botany Bay, are not poisonous weeds—they are only soiled and trampled flowers; it needs only you to gather them up, to bring them beneath the beams of the everlasting sun and beneath the rains of the sky, and they will bloom and beautify the land which they once threatened to discredit or destroy.

To these children we wish to give not merely a secular education, but also a religious education. It seems to me that secular education without scriptural is giving power, but giving no principle to regulate that power: it seems to me like building ships of the most approved construction, but forgetting or neglecting to put on board a compass and a chart, and to append to each ship a helm; and then letting these vessels float upon the ocean, to founder in the first hurricane. We teach the young secular knowledge, because it is useful, important—nay, necessary to do so; but we teach them, contemporaneously, the knowledge

of God and Christ Jesus, which not only beautifies and regulates the other, but "opens" for them "the kingdom of heaven," as "for all believers."

I know that some are the advocates for teaching secular knowledge only. I must say I have always felt, my dear friends, great pity for the schoolmaster who is placed in a school and told—'Now teach everything upon earth, but do not meddle with religion;' and I have thought of the difficulties in which he would be placed. Suppose that master, for instance, is explaining botany to his school. He selects a rose, and begins to tell the children that it belongs to such a class, or to such a genus, and has such a property—such fragrance, such virtues; he then begins to tell them that it is a favourite symbol with poets, and adds also that it is associated with the history of England—the white and red roses of the houses of York and Lancaster; he then begins to tell them that it is used also in a book called the Bible, and in that book it describes the excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Rose of Sharon. Up starts one of the boys—'Hold, Sir; I am a Jew; I do not believe in such a Saviour, and I cannot admit of such an application.' Or I can imagine him describing the origin of books—what they were made of—first leaves, then parchment on a roller; and then he begins to tell his scholars that the Bible is so called as being The Book, the best book in the world. Up starts a sceptic child—'My father does not believe the Bible, and I do not believe it; you are violating the rules of the school.' Now, I ask, must not that teacher be placed in a very awkward situation? He may speak of every book, from the book of Jasher down to the books of Mormon,—but he must not speak one word concerning the Bible; he may mention every illustrious person, from Noah down to Napoleon,—but he dare not speak of Him who hallowed the very universe with His glory—the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And therefore I have felt the difficulty of conceiving secular education being conveyed in these schools, separated from religious education. Not that I wish the sectarianism of religion to be taught; let the Bible be the school-book, and I am satisfied; let the Bible be the great Directory in the school, and it seems to me to be enough.

Do not, however, misapprehend me, as if I were against teaching secular knowledge. I think many persons err in this respect. They teach their children the way to heaven, but do not teach them the duties and responsibilities of earth. Many parents educate their children as if they had nothing to do with the world, but to get over it like skaters upon thin ice, as rapidly as they can, in order to be sure at length to be in heaven. Now it seems to me, that we must educate our children for the world, as well as for heaven; not for the adoption of the world's maxims, or for the imitation of the world's example, but for the discharge of the world's duties. You must teach your children, by all means, to pray; teach them to read; teach them to come to the house of God; teach them to visit the throne of grace; fit them, by the grace of God, for the house of God in glory;—but you must also prepare them for the counter, and for the Exchange, and for the army, and for the navy,—for they have to fulfil responsibilities in the world, as well as to prepare for heaven; they have duties to discharge to Cæsar, as well as privileges to receive from Christ. The child that gets a wrong view of the world is as likely to make shipwreck as the child that receives a wrong view of heaven. The world is the great battle-field, on which the conflict is to be sustained: the shop, the Exchange, the army, the navy, the Parliament, are the places where our character is to be tested; and unless we are made acquainted with all that is before us in the world, and all that we are to do and dare and conquer, we have not that "faith" which "overcomes the world," and which is made perfect in fruition. So that we wish to teach both knowledges combined, because we believe both to be necessary.

There are but two modes of treatment of the rising generation—namely, the prevention of the crime or the punishment of the criminal. One or other you must adopt; and I have always felt it to be a most painful thing to see children before a magistrate, at the police offices, who were really never taught the vast distinctions between vice and virtue, between holiness and sin, but who were allowed to grow up in the belief, that it is their duty to enrich themselves at their neighbours' expense; and then they are punished for principles which have been engrafted on their earliest recollections, and which have been taught them beneath the shelter and authority of a mother's home. My dear friends, you ought to prevent the growth of the juvenile criminal, rather than punish the full-grown and matured criminal; you ought to exer-

cise the privilege of prevention rather than the stern duty of punishment; and in doing so you would not only fall in with the prescriptions of the Gospel more fully, but you would leave upon society an impression more permanent and more valuable. And let me say, (if this constitute any argument,) that it would be more economical for you to do so. We pay so much for Poor's Rates, and Police tax, and taxes for goals, just because we feel so little interest and do so little for the instruction of the rising race. Let me tell you, that if a school-master do not lay hold of that poor child in Drury-lane, a policeman will lay hold of him; if you do not place him in a Christian school, you will find him in Newgate, or Bridewell, or some other prison in our country; and if you were to give more for the maintenance of Christian schools, depend upon it you would be taxed much less for goals, and all the punitive apparatus with which our country is furnished.

And if you looked at the matter in a larger scale, you would pay more attention to it. Where is property the best throughout the world? Where would you have an estate for the maintenance of your children? Would it not be in this country? How much do you think was Lot's house worth in Sodom, into which the rabble were ready to burst every moment? Very little. How much was property worth in France, at the time of the Revolution? Very little. And how comes it to pass that the barren acres of Scotland will fetch more than the fertile acres of Mahometan Turkey? The answer is, because Christian education has made a visible impression upon the one, while the other is completely overrun with ignorance and superstition. But I will not dwell upon these grounds: I put the matter upon the highest ground of all. Train children for Christ; prepare their hearts for immortality and glory; transplant them from a soil in which they wither, to a soil in which they will grow and prosper.

Help us at this time. We want your hearty help. If causes are to be tried by the obstructions in their way, and are to be judged to be excellent in proportion to the multitude of difficulties they meet with, our schools must occupy a foremost place in the number. We have met with difficulties at every step—obstructions at almost every portion of our progress; and I should not wonder if all we should be able to accomplish would be, just roofing the building and letting it remain for twelve months, to remind you that the vast auditory of Exeter Hall did not respond to duty, to privilege. But some, I know, will shake their heads, and say—'Ah! we told you that it would be so; we told you that you had not counted the cost.' Such persons, if they had lived in the days of the apostle Paul, would have bid him sit down and be quiet; they would have told Martin Luther not to disturb the world, and would have prevented Wilberforce from making one effort, which was crowned ultimately with success by the emancipation of the slave. The work will not stand still. I am just as much convinced that we shall have large and flourishing schools there, whether you will or not, as I am of my own existence; and if you, my own people, will not contribute to our aid, then I and one or two more will go and beg from house to house, throughout the parish in which the schools are situate, and give the last farthing we can spare ourselves; for I am sure that a Christian school is as necessary there as a Christian church. And, my Christian friends, we have been a large and flourishing congregation there for some years, and our schools have been positively a discredit to us. An effort, however, has now been made to improve them, which I hope you will liberally support.

Let me beg of you, then, my dear friends, to give what you can. I hope no one will refrain from giving something. What a privilege is it to be able to contribute something to prepare one babe for being useful upon earth, and happy in eternity! I know that the objection is often felt—'Why, you are always asking for money; and every sermon of this kind concludes about money!' My dear friends, the reason is just this: it is because bricks, and lime, and timber cannot be had gratis; it is because the poor men who are working hard six days a-week, have their meals and families to provide for. It is our duty to pay them; and when you contribute a sovereign to the plate this day, you just contribute the small representative in little space, the portable representative of so much bricks or mortar, or of so much labour in the education of the young.\*

\* The Collection, we understand, amounted to £98.

THE THIRD OF A COURSE OF LECTURES  
ON THE  
CONNEXION BETWEEN  
NATURAL PHILOSOPHY AND REVEALED RELIGION.

DELIVERED IN VERULAM EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, LAMBETH,  
ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 8, 1847,

Before the Members of the Church of England Young Men's Society,  
(South West London Auxillary,)

BY THE

REV. HENRY CHRISTMAS, M.A., F.R.S., F.S.A.,  
Minister of the Chapel.

*"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."*—Genesis i. 3.

THE object of the first two lectures of this course, has been to show that the Book of Nature rightly read, and the Book of Revelation, give us the same history. It has been my object to prove that God tells us the same things; whether He speaks to us by means of the stars above, or the earth beneath, or whether He speaks to us by the voice of Inspiration—that truth is at all times one and the same—that it cannot, under one circumstance, reveal to us one aspect, and under another circumstance another aspect of affairs, but that it must always tend in the same direction, and always be concentrated in the same point. The object of the present lecture is somewhat more profound. We shall have now to show, not only that God doth at all times convey to us the same facts, not only that there is a perfect consistency between His truth as revealed to us in His works, and His truth as revealed to us in His Word; but, also, that His works rightly read, are capable of throwing a light upon His own nature and attributes—that we may by duly studying therein, come to a somewhat competent knowledge of His nature who made them—that the most wondrous of His attributes, and the most glorious of His perfections are stamped on the works of His creation; and that though we cannot "by searching find out God," yet we may find out sufficient concerning Him, by examining the records of His power, to fill our minds with awe at His perfections, and with love for His wondrous beneficence. This power, namely, the power of ascertaining somewhat concerning His attributes, and of understanding somewhat of His nature, by rightly examining the works of creation, will more peculiarly be brought before us, when we consider that topic which is given to us in our text—"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."

We may deduce much knowledge of the wisdom and the beneficence of God, from observing the boundless provision which He has made for us in every part of creation. We see how He has studded the world in which we live with good; how He has provided for every want of humanity, and how He has given us not only the necessities of life, but "all things richly to enjoy"—all things which may tend to make this life a foretaste of the better life to come. But by means of those facts which are connected with the higher parts of philosophy, we are able to ascertain not this only, but also some glimmering of information as to His Divine perfections, His own inner nature, so to speak; and, therefore, to-night we shall endeavour to show how far this nature is revealed to us by the laws of His creation, and how by this one circumstance, that "God said, Let there be light: and there was light," how by the very existence of that wondrous fluid, and our investigation of its laws, we may investigate the power and wisdom of Him who made it.

In order to do this, we will take a brief review of that which we know concerning it. "God said, Let there be light: and there was light." We shall not now call your attention to any other circumstances connected with the nature of light, than those which regard its visibility and its power of making known to us that which exists. We shall not now speak, (at least we shall not in the earlier part of this lecture speak,) concerning it under any other aspect, under any other phase, than that of being the fluid whereby all things become visible. Under these circumstances, then, we shall regard, first, the philosophy of its transmission. We know that all things are visible, simply by the transmission of rays of light. We speak of the transmission of rays of

light, because the term is more easy to be understood than any other that we could use—not thereby attempting to invalidate that which now we know to be true, namely, the undulatory theory of light. But still, using the common form of speech, on account of its more easy and intelligible character, we say that all things become visible to us by means of the rays of light which are transmitted from them to us;—that the sun in the heavens is visible to us by reason of those rays which make an impression upon our senses, and which cause us to know that the sun there exists. The rays of light which pass to us from the moon and from the stars make known to us their existence: and it matters not for our purpose, whether the light radiate from any inherent quality of the body itself, or whether it be light *reflected* therefrom. The light of the sun comes to us, because the sun is a luminous body; the light of the moon comes to us because her light is reflected from the sun; the light of the stars comes to us because, according to all that we know of them, they are luminous bodies; the light of the planets comes to us, because the light is reflected from them, being originally the light of the sun. We see objects at a distance on the earth, by reason of the sun's rays, or the rays of the moon, or the rays of any other luminous body, falling upon them; and we have no other means of ascertaining their existence than by the rays of light passing from them to us.

Now it is plain, that as this is the case, it is a matter of consequence to us, in any philosophical investigations, that we should know at what rate these rays of light travel; for light comes from the sun to us, and we only know of the very existence of the sun by the transmission of such rays. Then it follows that some space of time, whether long or short, must be occupied by their transmission, and some space of time, therefore, must be occupied in conveying to us the knowledge that there the sun exists, that there the moon occupies her place in the heavens, that there the stars are shining above us, or that at any given distance, or in any given spot, a visible object exists. Now we have been able to discover at what rate light is thus transmitted; and wonderful as the velocity may appear, yet it is a rate which has been ascertained by the most rigid experiments, and therefore, which cannot admit of the slightest doubt. We know, then, that a ray of light passes at the rate of a hundred and ninety-five thousands of miles in a second of time: so that supposing the distance of the earth from the sun to be ninety-five millions of miles, we may say, that a ray of light transmitted from the sun to the earth, will occupy about eight minutes in its transmission.

The first thought, then, which strikes our minds is that of simple wonder. We are struck with marvel that light, or that any body whatever, however impalpable and aerial may be its form, can pass through space at so rapid a rate. But when we come to consider the question further, we find far graver subjects for our wonder, far more important causes for our interest. And, first, we observe, then, that as the rays of light are transmitted at one uniform rate throughout space, it will follow that the more distant bodies will take a greater proportion of time in transmitting to us the rays of light, and making visible, therefore, to us their existence. Let us consider for a moment. If it takes eight minutes for a single ray of light to pass from the sun to the earth, it will follow that eight minutes will elapse before we can on the earth become aware by our sight of the existence of the sun. Let us carry this out a little further, and suppose that there is a star at so great a distance from the earth, that instead of taking eight minutes, it will take a thousand years for the transmission of the rays of light from that star to the earth; and we shall then find that it will take a thousand years before we can be aware of the existence of that star. Again, to pursue the same thought another step, and note what are the actual discoveries which have been made; and we shall become aware that there are nebulae so far off, that according to the computation which we have been enabled to make concerning them, it would take at least two hundred millions of years before their light could be transmitted to the earth, and that consequently it must have occupied two hundred millions of years before, in this identical spot of the creation in which we now are, their light can have become visible.

Now these are not things which are matters of mere conjecture; they are matters of mathematical proof; and consequently as absolutely certain as that two and two make four, or as any other fact, either geometrical or arithmetical, which may be proved by the action of the same rules. And we are not to stop at mere wonder in these cases, but we are to consider whereto they tend, and to what conclusions they lead us. And the first conclusion, then, will be that there are parts of the creation which have been in existence for at least

two hundred millions of years and more, inasmuch as that time must have elapsed before their rays could have reached that part of the creation in which our own world has its place. Here, then, at once we find that however we interpret the words which are given to us in the first book of Moses, that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," we are not at all events to imagine that six thousand years ago God made all things out of nothing by "the Word of His power," but that at distances of time inconceivably vast, the actions of creation were still going on—that at distances of time of which we can form no adequate idea, and of which the words that we use are rather symbols for practical use, than means to give us any adequate notion—that at distances of time so vast as these, the work of creation was already in operation, and had been probably for spaces of time as vast before.

This, then, is one aspect under which we regard the enormous distances which astronomy, and more especially by means of the laws of light, reveals to us. But it does not stop here. These are topics into which we shall have occasion to enter at some length, when we speak of the formation of the world geologically. All that we have now to do is to speak of the laws of light. We must, then, regard it under a somewhat different aspect, and see whether we cannot derive still more wonderful results from it. Take, then, some given space in creation, and let it be supposed that there exists a star at a given distance from our world, and that it will take a hundred years in order to the transmission of light from that star to the earth. We observe that as the very existence of that star to us is only made known by the passage of light from it, so that we can only see it by means of the rays of light which have already parted therefrom, a ray of light to be visible by us, must have departed from that star a hundred years ago. Now as we have a knowledge of that star's existence, so also we may conceive it to be possible for us to have some knowledge of that which is carried on there, of the nature of the surface, of the actions of those who are inhabiting that separate and individual star.

Let it be supposed, then, that this power were granted to any one upon earth, and it will follow that in looking upon that star, he beholds it not as it is at the moment when he regards it, but as it was a hundred years ago, for he sees it as it was at the time when the rays which are now present, were departing from its surface. In like manner, if we look at the sun, we see it, not as it is at this precise moment, but as it was eight minutes ago.

We may carry on this view of the subject, and we may say that we see another planet as it was half an hour ago, that we see another as it was five or six hours ago—some stars as they were many years ago, and one, for example, as it was a hundred years ago. Now if it were possible for us (and how know we but that there are beings which have the power?) to observe, and to observe accurately, all that went on upon the surface of that star—if we could see its separate inhabitants—if we could observe their acts, and contemplate that on which they were engaged, we should see them not as they are now, but as they were a hundred years ago. And let us consider that they have the same power with regard to us: we perceive, then, that they regarding us, and having powers similar to those which we are attributing to the observer for this purpose, would behold the surface of the earth, not as it now exists, but as it was one hundred years ago. Since that, a century has elapsed; but they are looking on our ancestors living and moving, engaged in their several pursuits, some of war, some of commerce, and all as they were before that century of years had passed away. Let us take another distance still further, say another hundred years, and at a comparative space we will place another being with the same faculties of observation. It will follow that he will regard this world as it was two hundred years ago. Let us suppose another still further off, from which place it would take a thousand years for the transmission of a ray of light, and it follows that he would behold us as we were before ten centuries had sped on their way. And thus we may make out the various points, as it were, in space, from which may be contemplated any specific point of time ever existing in this world. In one place the disciples may be seen going upon their apostolic mission and carrying the glad tidings of salvation among the nations. In another we may see the William of Normandy bringing his troops to this land and overwhelming our ancient Saxon government. In another place still further off, we may behold the existing splendour of the great Babylonian Empire—in another, a little nearer, the foundation of the still vaster power of Rome. So we may mark out points throughout the vast realms of space from which it would be possible for beings so gifted to contemplate this world in which we live under



every moment of time itself, and from which every specific action which had ever taken place upon its surface might be distinctly visible.

This, then, is one of the most important points of view under which we may consider the aspect of space at large with reference to the world in which we live; but it requires that we should consider it a little more attentively. We acknowledge that the subject which we have now brought before you is one of great abstruseness, and that it requires the most profound and careful thought; we, therefore, entreat you to give us that diligent attention while we prosecute a little further still our inquiries concerning the nature of these laws of light, and that which those laws teach to us concerning the omniscience of God. Hitherto we have seen that by taking various points throughout the realms of space, and supposing a being there placed capable of beholding with a clear eye that which takes place at any given distance, it would be possible for beings so arranged throughout those realms of space to behold the world on which we live at any given period of its history; and thus that on the boundless plain of creation there is written, as in an indelible library, every action which has taken place throughout the whole history of the world since the creation of man; so that there is no space of time which has not its corresponding point in space, where at this very moment the rays of light proceeding from our planet at that time are not arriving, and where consequently any being having the capacity to observe would not be able to perceive the action itself taking place. And here, then, we learn from this, that every act which hath been accomplished is in its course of transmission throughout infinite space—that as it goes further and still further, it is still not forgotten, nor the power of observing it lost; it is only carried to a point more remote, but still within the realms of the Divine perception.

Now hitherto we know that this present race of men, this existing creation, of which we ourselves form part, hath existed upwards of six thousand years; and we have seen that there are heavenly bodies the rays from which must have taken at least two hundred millions of years in passing to us—a space of time so stupendous as to show, that the knowledge of events which have taken place in this world cannot, by any physical power, pass for incalculable ages even to that extent of creation with which we ourselves are acquainted. This whole solar system might be blotted out of the page of creation, but its loss would not be perceived. Night by night in the starry heavens of those distant worlds would the light from our sun, shining as a small star, be visible, and two hundred millions of years must elapse before the loss of transmitted light would announce to the midnight watcher in those regions that a system had ceased to exist. And it is possible to reverse this picture.

We know that among ourselves there are none capable of making observations in this way. We know that in a very short space before us our eyes fail: we require them to be assisted by optical instruments. Our telescopes may carry our sight far indeed, but not sufficiently clearly nor with sufficient power to enable us to discern that which is being done in distant worlds. But it does not follow therefore that because we are unable to perceive these things there are no beings in existence able to do so. We must remember, in the first place, that we are fallen physically, as well as morally and mentally, from our original perfection. And though it may be impossible for us to discern these wonders, still who shall say that it is impossible for the angels of God to perceive them? Who shall say that there are not beings created by His infinite power, and guided by His infinite wisdom, capable of passing from world to world throughout the whole extent of His visible creation, analyzing the acts that take place in any corner thereof, and reporting them to the very central court and palace of Heaven? It is true that no such means of communication are necessary to Him whose watchful eye is over all His works. He needs no ministers of His celestial state, but He has been pleased to reveal Himself to us, as making use, both of the power and the intelligence of created beings, partly, perhaps, in condescension to our infirmities, partly because a fit and honourable employment is thus bestowed on saints and angels, and partly, it may be, because the pomp and imperial dignity of Heaven is augmented and enhanced thereby. And as to the means whereby this can be done, who shall say that there are not beings whose vision, far beyond that which we can conceive, is able to ascertain with perfect accuracy every event transacted in every world which God ever created, and that such beings are not existing through every portion of space wherein those worlds are spread? It does not follow, therefore, we see, that because things are *practically* impossible to us, they are *philosophically* impossible. We find and know that there are myriads of beings

far higher in their position than we are in this our lapsed state : and though ineffable grandeur and dignity were conferred upon humanity by the taking of our nature upon Him by Christ, it did not physically restore us in this our fallen world to those conditions which once we had, and to which, and still greater than which, we shall one day return.

Now we say that these views are not the only views under which we may consider transmission of light, and the aspect metaphysical and moral under which we may contemplate it. Hitherto we have regarded it only in one way ; and we have seen events, as it were, carried out in creation from world to world, from system to system, on the wings of those rays which make known to distant planets the existence of our own. Let us consider, then, something further. In our researches into physical truth, it is not necessary merely to make use of the telescope, in order that we may bring near to us that which is at a vast distance, and to enable us to discern that which would otherwise escape our eyes ; but we must also have the power of bringing it practically so close to us, and of contemplating it for so long a time, that we may be able to note accurately not only every action, but also every separate movement which conduces thereto. In order that this may be done, (carrying the same views forward again concerning the transmission of light,) let us conceive of a certain action taking place upon this world which requires the careful investigation of angelic intelligences. Let us suppose that that act itself occupies but a short time, but that in order rightly to be understood, it must be placed, as it were, under a moral microscope, and that it shall be necessary to lengthen the apparent time in which it shall take place, and to investigate accurately and carefully all its component parts. This we find provided for by these very same laws. We suppose, then, a being passing through space at a rate equal to that required for the transmission of light—consequently the light and with it the vision of the event in question passes through space with that being, he still keeping his eye upon that transaction, thus rendered stationary for his inspection. It will consequently follow that if his motion be *more* rapid than that of the rays of light which convey to him the events which he is regarding, that will, as it were, throw back the time of the action. Let us suppose that a distance of a hundred years shall take place during the transmission of the ray of light, and the transmission of the angelic intelligence from one point of space to another : it will follow, then, that that act which may perhaps in itself take the space of a quarter of an hour will, to his eye, occupy a hundred years—that during the whole of those hundred years it will be passing in review before him—that he will have an opportunity of examining it spot by spot, or motion by motion ; and thus as the microscope brings under a nearer angle before us the visible creation, so in like manner will the moral creation be brought under a moral microscope before those intelligences of which we speak ; and as we can with the microscope separate the very dust upon the wing of the butterfly, so can those angelic intelligences, under such circumstances, separate the component parts of every human action observed by them, lengthening out the time which it takes to perform them. And thus we have not only made known to distant parts of the creation that which is transacted here on earth, but we have also, in respect of those events which are carried on at any given period of time, a certain portion of time assigned for the investigation of them, during the whole of which portion of time they are, as it were, held under a moral microscope for the observation of God's intelligent beings.

Here again we must entreat you (perfectly aware as we are that the subject on which we are addressing you is one which taxes the very highest faculties of man) to pay the closest attention to these few facts—simple facts we dare not call them ; for they are facts which though revealed to us by our knowledge of simple laws, and being at the same time simple deductions from those laws, are still such as require our careful investigation, in order to impress us not only with the notion of their importance, but also with the notion of their truth. Can we then, we ask, find any greater means of proving the omniscience of God than by showing you that that omniscience is involved, bound up, and rendered indispensable by the very laws of His physical creation ;—that there is not an action which hath taken place within the sphere of that creation, which is not visible at this very moment from some point thereof ; that there shall not take place an act at any given time yet to come, which shall not be visible to the very furthest extent of that creation, so long as the creation itself shall continue in existence ? We maintain that the laws of light, considered from this point of view, present to us the omniscience of God under an aspect so astounding, so perfectly incontrovertible, and yet so simple when rightly and duly considered, that the whole wonder vanishes from

our mind at once. We not only no longer marvel that God knows all things, but we perceive that it is absolutely impossible that He cannot know them. We see, moreover, that every act of man is passing before Him by the lengthening out of the time as well as by the carrying out of the motion itself into space. We find that every deed, therefore, of man, and every circumstance that takes place upon earth, are under His contemplation not for hundreds of years only but for thousands of ages, and shall continue so to be for ever, even if the creation itself should sink into annihilation.

But it is not only this to which we would call your attention : we would also speak to you concerning another circumstance, which tends very much to lay the same class of facts before your notice, but still under a somewhat different aspect. What we know concerning the infinite divisibility of matter teaches us that wherever there exists space there will exist matter also. We know that around the globe which we inhabit there is an atmosphere, and that atmosphere becomes more rare and still more rare in proportion as we recede from the globe itself ; so that, being of a known density here on the surface in order that men and animals may breathe it, it becomes at a certain distance from the surface of the earth too rare for that purpose ; and at a greater distance again above that it becomes so rarified and refined as no longer to be capable of having its existence proved by any physical means that we have. We know to a certain extent how far it exists, because it is rendered visible to us by the action of electricity ; but beyond that, at those higher parts of the atmosphere where the electricity itself is not rendered visible, we have no means of proving its existence at all, except by means of an argument ; but we say that, since it becomes still rarer as we recede, that the process of rarification must go on and on for ever, and that we can find therefore no place where there shall not be an atmosphere, though that atmosphere may be of so extremely rarified a character that no instruments over which man has the power can possibly verify its existence. Now if there be that atmosphere (and we believe there to be) to all worlds and all planets—for even around the moon, rarified and refined as it is, we believe that there does exist an atmosphere—we shall find that the whole of space must be filled with this refined, this subtle fluid, in various degrees of density. It will, as it proceeds in distance from the different worlds, become more and more rare, less and less perceptible, but still it must exist.

Thus, then, we get the idea that there is everywhere somewhat of matter pervading. And this teaches us a little more, and leads us a little further. We shall now consider this fact, which we wish you to bear carefully in your memories, with reference to the transmission of sound. It is said in the Word of God that for “every idle word that men shall speak they shall give an account in the day of judgment.” But it will be at once said by the greater part of mankind, “Who shall remember every idle word that men speak ?” Do we suppose that the God of all creation is engaged in keeping a record of all the “idle words” that in the course of many thousands of years the lips of men may utter ? Alas ! the physical qualities of matter will save us the trouble of investigations like these, for we have now to show you that that record is kept of itself—that the very laws of matter will keep the remembrance of them for ever. There is not a word that hath been spoken, there is not a sound that hath been uttered, from the very beginning of the creation, that is not preserved for eternity. The words that I am now speaking to you, in a second after they are uttered, have passed away from your ears ; you no longer perceive them ; but the vibrations of the air by which you become aware of their existence, continue. They surge onward and onward, not only to the very verge of our perceptible atmosphere ; but, we conceive, that they shall be heard at the very limits of creation itself, and that there is no act, no word, the waving of no leaf upon its stem, that doth not thus act upon and vibrate throughout all creation. We have already said that the words which I am now addressing to you, in the course of a single second will pass beyond your ears, because your ears are not acute enough to catch those more minute vibrations. But we believe that there are beings who are able to detect them long after they have become imperceptible to human organs, and beings again which can detect them when they have passed away from those whom we have in the second place mentioned. Some animals may perceive them long after your ears are incapable of observing them. Insects, we have reason to think, under many circumstances, can hear sounds which have become totally inaudible to coarser organs. And there are, doubtless, beings capable of hearing every word, and of ascertaining the exact nature and quality of every vibration of the atmosphere from the very time that that atmosphere

was first wrapped around the globe. The air which we breathe is a vast library upon which the laws of matter have written, and written in characters which cannot be effaced, every word which man has spoken—every word uttered in carelessness or anger, every broken vow, every unfulfilled promise, every harsh and hasty expression; and not only this, but that same library preserves and records for ever before the ear of the Eternal, every breathing of prayer—every word which has been uttered to bring mankind into the path of duty—all that has been said to assure his mind of a Creator's power, and of the love testified by a Saviour's death. And oh! how important, how unspeakably momentous is that which is thus inscribed for ever and ever on the atmosphere above us and around us! We have no longer any need to inquire how it is that "every idle word that men speak" shall be brought into account against them, for we perceive that every act which man hath committed is on its way now to the very extremest limits of the Divine empire; and, to go no further than the world in which we live, every word which hath been spoken is written in imperishable letters upon the vault of indestructible space. These are, indeed, awful facts; but they are not the less facts because they are most awful and abstruse. They are facts which we shall do well, not only carefully to examine, but to lay up within our own hearts, to give us food for meditation. "Thou, God, seest me." How tremendous is the commentary which the book of nature thus reads to us upon words like these!

And now we must, before we close this lecture, speak to you somewhat concerning another aspect under which we are to regard these same circumstances. We have already seen somewhat of that which is conveyed to us by the laws of light; we have seen somewhat of that which is conveyed to us by the laws of sound. Now let us observe that it is said that we have reason to think that that which we call light doth also present itself to us under the form of heat, the form of magnetism, the form of galvanism, the form of electricity; and recent discoveries have rendered it not only possible, but probable and almost certain, that in accordance with the aspects under which it does present itself will it take one or other of these shapes. Now if this be true, (and we have every reason to believe it to be so; we have all the deductions of science in its favour, and we have nothing at all against it; we have every analogy to believe it, and we have no cause whatever to disbelieve it,) it follows that there is a simplicity in God's creation which corresponds with the simplicity of His revelation. We find that there is, as it were, but one act; and in like manner, if we look at the Scriptures of truth, we find that there is but one design. It is of great importance that we should observe that unity running throughout the whole. If we take the Book of God and examine it from the very beginning, we shall find that the first chapters bear testimony to God's love, and that in a peculiar way: They show us that when man had fallen from his own righteousness, God established an extraneous righteousness for him. And that one idea is carried on, sometimes by one means and sometimes by another, differing, indeed, and widely differing, in appearance, but all proving at last that but the same design is carried out throughout the whole of the Book of revelation. Sometimes it comes to man by the wonders of prophecy; sometimes it comes to him by the miraculous interposition of God's wrath upon the disobedient; sometimes by miracles whereby He interposes in favour of His own people; sometimes by the signs and symbols of the Mosaic law; sometimes, again, by a voice which speaks to the heart of His people, and which brings them to Him, as it were, by a direct path; but in all these ways we find that there is but the same great design uniformly pursued—that one design, testified by all these various modes and exhibiting itself in all these differing media, for bringing men unto Himself, doing away the evil of sin, and restoring the glory and dignity of human nature. And how great must be the glory and dignity of that nature, if we only consider the power which we have of thus realising the greatness and glory of God! The mind that is capable of taking in the vastness, even to such an extent as this, of the Creator, must be qualified for glories hereafter which we cannot here well conceive. And whatever there is, therefore, which tends to show us the unity of His acts—that there is but one action carried on throughout creation, as there is but one action carried on throughout the kingdom of grace—tends to show us that the Lord our God is one God, that the law of the Lord our God is one law, and that the love of the Lord our God is one love; and we are led, therefore, to contemplate Him as concentrating in Himself all truth, and representing Himself, therefore, as "The Truth, and the Life, and the Way." It shows us in the Son of His incarnate love all that is bright, all that is true, all that is lovely, all after

which we are to aspire, all which is to be our model here, and all which we are to hope for as our model throughout eternity.

This we regard to be the true and natural and necessary tendency of such doctrines as those which we have now laid before you. I observe, just by way of concluding this lecture, and the rather because I have noticed it in the syllabus which I have before me, that it will be necessary for me to return to one particular topic to which I have already alluded. I have pointed out to you that the atmosphere which exists throughout and over the world is known to us to exist to a certain extent only by means of electrical appearances; and it will be well, perhaps, that I should explain a little more clearly what I mean by "electrical appearances." We are now pretty well aware that it is by means of a current of electricity that the earth revolves upon its axis, and that this current is continually passing from the north to the south—not from the north to the south of this world only, but from the northward to the southward throughout the whole system—and for anything that we know to the contrary, throughout much larger systems of the same character. We are able to ascertain this, by tracing the time and place at which it first makes its appearance; we are able to track that current of electricity, whereby the world is thus made to turn upon its axis; and as it goes through on its passage, we can trace it from point to point. And we are able by an artificial current, created under similar circumstances, or circumstances which we consider to be similar, to turn round a globe placed as we believe the earth to be. So that we have, in the first place, the proof which is derived from artificial means—namely, from creating a current of electricity, and thereby causing a globe to revolve; and we have also the proof derivable from the fact that our own globe does revolve, and that a current of electricity passes through it under such circumstances. Near to the globe itself the atmosphere is sufficiently dense to give the visible evidences of electric action; and this electric action presents the appearance of the Aurora Borealis, entering our globe at the north, and passing out at the south. And it is worthy of observation, that the phenomena of the Aurora Australis, as it is called, at the southern pole, are widely different from those at the northern pole, and that they respectively present precisely the appearances which would be expected from the electric current entering at the north and passing out at the south. This is interesting to us, not by reason of any peculiar analogy which it bears to the Book of God, but as revealing to us something of the laws whereby God is sustaining His own creation, showing to us the means whereby He is pleased to give us the vicissitudes of day and night, and, probably, of summer and winter. And if we find the same physical laws obtaining, and the same physical agency employed in other worlds which we observe in this—if the same power which causes our globe to revolve, walks on in its magnificent career throughout creation, dispensing the same blessings and causing the same effects, surely we cannot suppose that spiritual blessings are confined to us, and that the boundless love of our Almighty Creator is not manifested throughout a thousand worlds, and conferring happiness on incalculable multitudes of intelligent creatures.

Such are among the facts which have been but recently revealed to us by the researches of science. Are they not sufficient to show us that by rightly reading the Book of Nature we are at the same time reading the Book of God, and that by contemplating the laws of His creation under their true and proper aspect we are learning somewhat concerning the laws of His being? And when we speak of the laws of His being whose will is His law, and by whose will all things in heaven and earth are regulated, we can but be filled with adoring reverence that He hath been pleased to reveal to us His laws at all; and we may then take up the language of the psalmist, and say, "Oh! how I love Thy law! It is my delight to meditate therein day and night." In that law it is that we find the most wondrous proof of His power; and, above all, it is in that law that we find the most marvellous manifestations of His love. We here learn much concerning the grandeur of Him who hath made us—we learn more concerning our own apparent insignificance; and again that apparent insignificance vanishes, and we see the awful dignity of our nature and position. It assumes a grander and more stupendous development when we consider that He who hath constituted all these laws and hath created all these systems did condescend to take our nature—that He chose to dwell in this our world—that for our sakes did He suffer the infirmities of our fallen condition—and that He hath finally called us, not to what we were before He came, not to what we were before the fall, but to reign with Him for ever in His own empire of light.

## THE BELIEVER'S RELATION TO THE LAW.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. GEORGE FISK, LL.B.

PREACHED IN CHRIST CHAPEL, MAIDA HILL,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, DEC. 12, 1847.

*"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."*—Romans vii. 6.

God, as the sole sovereign of the universe, is of necessity the sole legislator. The Divine mind expressed is the substance of all His legislation. Whatever the mind of God may be in regard to other departments of creation beyond this to which we belong, certain it is that the expressed mind of God in reference to man is the substance of the Divine law. It follows, therefore, as a consequence upon this, that so long as God himself lives, (and that will be throughout eternity,) the law of God remains unchangeable in its permanence. The mind of God is God. So that it is not an incorrect mode of speaking, though it may seem far-fetched, to say that the declared will of God in the form of the law, as held forth to us, is God. Blessed be His holy name, He has declared His will; and all that it is needful for man to know in reference to that which God by His authority requires, is plainly and simply put on record; and the father of a family cannot, by daily and constant inculcation upon the minds of his children, more thoroughly exhibit his character to them by his assiduity, than God has exhibited His character to us in His revealed will, which is His law. We believe, therefore, that the law of God is permanent, not only for this present state of existence, but that we shall find, in a higher and better state, when all the triumphs of redemption shall have been realised, that it still continues the same.

It may, however, naturally be inquired—'Does there arise anything that shall mitigate man's condition as a sinner, in reference to the law—anything that by-and-by shall fit him for compliance with the law, for conformity to the mind and will of God?' We are thankful to be able to answer that inquiry in the affirmative, and to say without doubt, that provision is made for the full service of God, up to the very standard of His requirements, "in the spirit, and not in the letter." But seeing that the law of God is like God himself, a permanent thing, unchangeable in its requirements, it seems marvellous to us that it should be declared that in any sense we are "delivered from the law." And yet our text declares it; and throughout this chapter the apostle is asserting the true position of the real believer, the child of God, in reference to the law and to the sovereign Enactor of the law; and one of his propositions is, that so soon as a sinner has availed himself of the provisions of God's love in the Gospel of His dear Son, he is freed from the law. It is not said, that he is without law, but that he is freed from the law; and the word which he uses is a very striking one. It embraces the idea of redemption. "But now we are delivered from the law." The apostle, in writing to the Galatians, speaks of the same subject, in equally strong terms: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

So, then, the great object of the whole Gospel dispensation is to free those who are under the condemnation of the law, and yet to preserve intact the most perfect justice of God; and therefore it is true, that a believer is rightly delivered from God's law, and yet the law is not abrogated. The law remains in its full force—for being a transcript of the Divine mind, it admits not of alteration. Then it is manifest that alteration has taken place in the believer, in reference to the law.

Now there are two senses in which we say that man is naturally "under the law," or subject to the law. First, he is under, or subject to the law of God

simply because he is a creature, and therefore subject, even if no law had been proclaimed and published, to the Divine mind and will. Man, as an unfallen creature, became thus subject to Him—an obedience of which unquestionably he was capable. The law, in all its fulness, was declared to him; and all the blessedness which could supervene from obedience was announced to him, and set forth as his portion. He was, in his unfallen state, under, or subject to the law, for the purpose of obedience. When man fell the claim of God on his obedience was not suspended—it continued with all its energy and all its force; and man, as a fallen creature, deprived of those capabilities which he once possessed of yielding obedience, became subject to the law in the way of condemnation—in the way of guilt. And so the apostle, in the third chapter of his epistle to the Romans, declares, in the nineteenth verse—"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law;" that is, to the whole human family, without excepting an individual upon the face of the earth. "What things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God;" or, as the margin reads, "subject to the judgment of God." So, then, when God claims equally now, though man be fallen, the obedience which He claimed from him when he walked with Him in the bowers of Eden, He claims it in the way of penalty for all transgression, in the way of guilt and fearful condemnation.

Now it is nowhere affirmed in our text, that the believer is delivered from the claims which the law makes on obedience; but it is manifestly affirmed, that he is delivered from the painful penalty of the law, and from its power to condemn. And this great truth, which is one of the most important among the great elementary truths of the Gospel, is illustrated, in the earlier part of the chapter, by a very striking figure. The apostle, you observe, says—"Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?" That is his general proposition. It is true; the law has dominion over a man so long as he liveth, whether he be in this life or whether he be in the next. Its sanctions cannot be altered, its claims cannot be conceded. Then the illustration is this: "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he liveth,"—bound by the civil law, bound by the acknowledged law of God; "but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband;" that is, from the power and constraint of the law which bound her to her husband. She lives, after the death of her husband, in a new relation, under new circumstances; the law which bound her to her husband ceases to bind; he is dead, and she returns to the state of liberty in which she was before the constraint of the law was upon her. "So then," says the apostle, "if, while her husband liveth she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress,"—simply because it would be an attempt to evade the sanction of the law, which is unchangeable: "but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law," delivered from it entirely, as if in compliance with the law no sound had escaped her lips at the day of marriage. "But if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man,"—her husband being dead. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye are also become dead to the law,"—in this manner, in this sense "dead to the law, by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." The law was constantly acting upon our sinful nature, drawing into activity its sinful propensities. By the law is the knowledge of sin—through the law is the activity of sin. "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held;" or, as the margin perhaps better renders it—"we being dead to that by which we were held;" "that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." For whether it be the husband that dies, leaving the wife free from the constraint of the law, or whether it be the wife that dies, leaving the husband free from the constraint of the law, the argument is the same; but it seemed to suit the apostle's purpose rather better to put it in the form in which we have it in the margin: "We who are bound to the law being dead"—dead to its influence,—in order that we may stand in a new relationship to God, in and through Christ Jesus.

Then, dear brethren, it is nowhere affirmed by the apostle that the law suspends its claims upon obedience, but that it does suspend the infliction of

penalty—that it does suspend the charge of guilt in reference to those who have come forth and laid hold of the righteousness which is in Christ Jesus, and have been justified by the efficacy of that righteousness which is “unto all and upon all them that believe.” The great difference to be observed is this,—that we are no longer as believers to look to the law as that by which we hope to be justified, that we have no longer to look to it in the supposition that our best obedience can yield anything acceptable in the sight of God; but that we must seek with all the energy, the spiritual energy of a renewed nature, to glorify God in a willing compliance with His known mind. This, then, is the simple statement of the apostle—that those who partake of Christ and His justifying righteousness are delivered from the penalty of the law: are delivered from the guilt which the law charges against the soul; and this in order that they may serve God, “not in the oldness of the letter,” not in a spirit of bondage, but in a spirit of willing and rejoicing freedom,—declaring with their hearts and with their lives that the law of God is dearer to them than thousands of gold and silver.

And such, then, being the definite state and condition of the true believer, does it not at once appear plain to you, dear brethren, that it must be the result of the free and sovereign grace of God displayed towards him? If there be an emancipation so great as this which the apostle affirms, it can only have been effected by the hand of Omnipotence; if there be such a spiritualization of our nature as shall enable us to lay aside all hope of self-justification, and to choose the law of God as the rule of our willing and rejoicing obedience, surely it must be the operation of a power greater than man's, that has wrought a change so remarkable and so effectual.

The true believer, then, stands in a position of unspeakable dignity; he partakes of “the liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free;” he lays aside the fetters of a legal bondage; and that law against which all his nature was once accustomed to strive, in a spirit of daring and obstinate contention, is the law which his new nature delights in—which reflecting Deity in its perfection, possesses a charm which nothing besides possesses.

Then, dear brethren, looking upon this as the ascertained state of the true Christian, let us each one inquire—Am I at this moment delivered from the law; from its penalty—from its condemnation—from its curse? Or have I all my days been living in a vain endeavour to comply with its vast demands, and to brace up a fallen and incapable nature for the high achievements of a holy obedience? In other words, instead of being a candidate for this glorious liberty, have I toiled in the fires of an unsuccessful effort at obedience? Instead of realising the position of positive safety which the free grace of God has provided for me in Christ Jesus, have I sought to present the poor tattered rags of my own righteousness as my proper clothing, when seeking to approach a holy and most righteous God?

Dear brethren, if we have come with simplicity of faith and earnestness of purpose to the cross of the Redeemer—if then we have looked upwards, and beheld the value and the efficacy of that one atonement, once and for ever made—if we have laid down all that we have ever prided ourselves upon and boasted of, in the way of legal obedience—if we have laid our finger upon our lips and said, “Unclean, unclean”—if we have come forbearing to urge any one deed, looking simply to the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and seeking to have that work, with all its beneficial efficacy, applied to our souls,—then we are “free from the law,” we are delivered from its bondage; and now God claims our obedience, “not in the oldness of the letter, but in newness of spirit,” arising out of that newness of relation, that positively spiritual relation to which we are brought by His free grace, in and through Christ Jesus. “Being justified by faith,” being freed therefore from condemnation, being “accepted” therefore “in the beloved,” God looks upon us at once as standing to Him in the same relation that His dear Son stands, who actively fulfilled the law, and met all its claims, and satisfied all its demands. He regards every true believer united to Him as in Christ: what Christ has done the true believer in Him has done—what Christ has suffered the true believer in Him has suffered: and if the sinner being thus accepted of God, “serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter,” it is simply because he has been “accepted in the beloved.” Righteousness of his own he has none; obedience of his own he has none to boast: he has nothing wherewith he may come before the Lord; he is empty-handed; he is destitute of everything that can commend him to the Divine favour but Jesus, his



"wisdom," his "righteousness," his "sanctification," and his "redemption." He partakes of liberty; and God charges no condemnation against him, because He has "laid help for him on One that is mighty," and has "laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Then, dear brethren, if there be any who are conscious that they are still under the bondage of the law—who are seeking to commend themselves to God by amendment of life, by improvement in moral habitude, by anything that pertains to their own nature and the strivings of that nature, let them be convinced, and let them lay aside their fallacious and delusive efforts and come in their destitution and accept the provision of God's mercy and love in Christ Jesus; and "though their sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool;" and they shall stand free from all the constraints of that law, they being dead to the law which once constrained and bound them—for they shall be enabled to say, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me;" and I am therefore qualified, by this spiritual change, to serve no longer "in the oldness of the letter, but in newness of spirit."

Finally, dear brethren, let me again address those who have reason to take to themselves the comforting assurance that they are delivered from the constraint of the law—from its penalty and from its condemnation. Oh! let me ask them to consider unto what they have been called. Let me ask them to bear in mind constantly the dignity of the position which they occupy, the holiness of the relation in which they stand to God—"heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ"—those upon whom God hath opened the richest treasures of His mercy and loving-kindness—those whom "the king delighteth to honour"—those who shall wear the white garments of salvation, and sit down in the glorious inheritance of the kingdom. Oh! let them see, then, that they "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called." Let their whole lives be a protest, fierce and uncompromising, against the world—the world's fallacies, and the world's unsatisfying pursuits. Oh! let them make their protest, under all circumstances; even when the voice of the world's antagonism may be the loudest against them, let them not shrink from bearing witness for Christ, and seeking to shew forth that service of the law "in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter," which shall give proof of their real spirituality. Dear brethren, we would have your Christianity such; we would have it consist not merely in acquaintance with doctrines, however extensive and accurate that acquaintance may be—but we would have it a Christianity the result of Divine truth rooted in your hearts, and germinating and expanding and bearing fruit day by day unto life eternal. As you have been called unto holiness, we would have you holy in thought, word and deed; as you have been called unto liberty, we would have every fetter of bondage entirely removed from you; we would have you free from the "law of sin," in all its forms and varieties. If you have been called by Almighty grace to breathe the pure atmosphere of the sanctuary of God, we would have you cultivate all those graces of the mind and heart that shall fit you to participate in the holy exercises of that sanctuary; we would have you under all the circumstances of your daily life presenting that inflexible simplicity and sincerity of Christian practice which shall give proof to others that although you have been delivered from the constraint of the law, you are not among those who avail themselves of a fallacious view of liberty and indulge in licentiousness. Remember, if made partakers of the liberty wherewith Christ makes believers free, all your motives to duty become exalted and expand; and the highest and the strongest motive that can influence an immortal nature is that which is constantly acting upon you. Obey the motive in all its simplicity, yield to it in all its force, and let "holiness to the Lord," as a manifestation of the willingness of your service, be written (as it were) in every page of your personal biography, and mingle with the vibrations of your heart. Oh! let it be interwoven with every thought, imagination and desire; and let the practice of holiness lead you to look forward to the day of the Lord Jesus, as affording the time and the opportunity in which your holiness will be manifested; and the connexion of holiness with the kingdom of the Redeemer will become apparent to the whole church of the Redeemer. Thus, dear brethren, seek to live in the realization of your Christian liberty, and see that ye "stand fast in the faith, and be not entangled in the yoke of bondage."

## REST IN HEAVEN FOR THE WEARY SOUL.

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### A Funeral Sermon,

BY THE

REV. HUGH HUGHES, D.D.

PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, CLERKENWELL,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, NOV. 21, 1847.

On occasion of the death of a young member of the Congregation.

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*"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."—Rev. xiv. 13.*

THERE are few here present, who have not heard these words pronounced under circumstances of sorrow and solemnity, because there can be but few who have not stood by the grave of some dear departed relative, these being among the words which the church has selected for the consolation of survivors, upon committing their kindred's bodies to the ground, "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." And it is scarcely imaginable that any can hear them without a lively, though melancholy interest, without calling to mind affecting scenes, and afflictive trials, and without anticipating times of deliverance and reunion that shall more than compensate for all the sufferings of a vale of tears. We adopt them for the subject of our present evening meditation, instead of a miracle, or miracles of Scripture, as usual, in consequence of the recent departure of another young and exemplary member of the congregation.

From the connexion of the words with the rest of the inspired Volume, it would appear that they were originally written for the special support of those who should suffer persecution for the sake of Christ. They are immediately preceded by an account of the Lamb of God standing on Mount Sion, with thousands of His saints, and by a description of three angels flying in the midst of heaven, the first having the everlasting Gospel to preach, the second announcing the fall of Babylon, the third uttering the most terrible threats of punishment against those who shall worship the beast and his image. By these three angels appearing, as it were, in the wake of the Lamb, are by many divines understood the champions of the reformation, and the martyrs of the endeavour to restore pure Christianity in these western parts of the world; the first, he who has the everlasting Gospel to preach, pointing at those, who, by the promulgation of the truth exposed the corruptions of Popery, and thereby indicating the most effectual means of overthrowing its power; the second, he who announces the fall of Babylon, showing that the spell of Rome's spiritual dominion was broken, and that genuine religion was taking possession of men's minds; the third, who threatens punishment against the worshippers of the beast, typifying those bold and intrepid reformers who declared the pope to be antichrist, and denounced the doctrines and practices of his church as idolatrous, dangerous and damnable. If this exposition be correct, the dead, with respect to whom the words of the text were primarily uttered, were those Protestants, who, in countless numbers, were imprisoned, massacred, tortured and burned to death for resisting papal oppression, and maintaining a pure profession of the Gospel. 'Here,' says the sacred writer, 'is the patience of the saints;' 'here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.' And to support those who thus resisted unto blood, and to encourage them to give up life, rather than their good confession and steadfast principle, a voice comes down from the dwelling-place of the Almighty and the home of the redeemed, saying to the entranced divine—"Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth;" and to take away all doubt as to the truth and reality of the heavenly communication, the

Holy Ghost within the apostle's breast, confirms the announcement and assigns the reason on which it is founded—"Yea," or even so, "saith the Spirit, that they may rest," or because they rest "from their labours; and their works do follow them."

There is some difficulty about the meaning of the expression "henceforth," in this announcement from heaven. It cannot be intended to imply, that they who died in the Lord *before* the voice came to St. John were not blessed. There is nothing in the Bible to countenance the notion, that a difference was to be made between the future state of the saints who died *before* the accomplishment of the Redeemer's work, and the future state of those who have died *since* the accomplishment of the Redeemer's work. Our Saviour himself has clearly intimated the contrary, having spoken of Abraham and Lazarus as already living in a state of blessedness, and having promised the thief on the cross that he should on the same day be with Him in paradise. Some think the expression "henceforth" to refer to the eminently happy lot of those saints who were taken out of this world before the terrible persecutions here predicted came upon the church of Christ, in the same sense as Solomon refers to the departed, who, when he considered the "oppressions that were done under the sun," praised the dead which were already dead, more than the living which were yet alive. As if the speaker from heaven had said—"When I contemplate the scenes of cruelty and torture, which await the followers of the Lamb, and bring to mind the havoc and desolation, which in those dreadful times will be made of His true church, I cannot but regard those as peculiarly blessed, who shall have died in the Lord before those evils actually come to pass." "From henceforth," (that is, from the commencement of these horrible persecutions which I now reveal,) most essentially blessed is their lot, who are already dead and at rest in the bosom of their Redeemer, since they are saved from sufferings and woes, too afflictive to be endured by flesh and blood."

But as we are not sure that the martyrs of the reformation suffered greater cruelties from Papal, than the martyrs of primitive and early Christianity did from Pagan and Mahometan nations; and we cannot, consequently, perceive that it was a peculiar blessing to be saved from the persecutors of the one age, more than from the persecutors of the other; it follows, that we must seek out another meaning of the expression "henceforth." And I believe it to be a meaning which at once overthrows a favourite error of Popery, and yields abundant consolation to the suffering professors of the true faith. You will call to mind, that no error of Popery created greater abuses than the doctrine of purgatory, which purported that many of the pious dead did not immediately upon the dissolution of the body enter into the joy of their Lord, but passed into an intermediate state—a state of comparative suffering—in which they continued, until, by virtue of their personal suffering, the dross and guilt of humanity that still clung to them were entirely purged away. It was maintained, that this period of purification might be shortened by the efficacy of the prayers of the living; and the priests of the Romish communion were paid in money, according to the number or nature of the masses offered for that purpose. Hence arose innumerable evils and abuses, both temporal and spiritual, false security of conscience, presumptuous continuance to the last in impenitence, an overvaluing of repentance, accompanied with liberality on a death bed, and a consequent robbery of the orphan, and a spoliation of the widow; evils and abuses, which at last became intolerably oppressive, and proved the necessity of a reformation, beyond the possibility of denial. So that it may be said, that the doctrine of purgatory, or the doctrine that the dead in Christ are *not*, on their departure, immediately blessed, was mainly instrumental in opening men's minds to the falsity of the Romish system, and in breaking up the supremacy of the Romish domination. Now the voice from heaven anticipates this period, and declares that "from henceforth"—from the enlightened period of the Reformation, it would be proved and maintained, and made clear to all, that the dead in Christ are, on the dissolution of the body, immediately blessed; that they immediately "rest from their labours," and that their works are *immediately* rewarded by an entrance into the joy of their Lord. The expression thus understood, which, it may be observed, implies both *henceforth* and *immediately*, and may here have been intentionally employed, on account of its comprehensively significant meaning, not only points at the subversion of the erroneous and dangerous doctrine in question, but furnishes very important consolation to the suffering followers of the Lamb. It assures them that their probation here below is no sooner ended, than all their tribu-

lation is over, and that the worst that hostility or disease can do to their mortal bodies is an *immediate*, as well as unspeakable gain to their immortal souls. No more sacrifice for sin is required and no more trials and sorrows enjoined ; and supported by this persuasion, the believer can face every difficulty and peril, as a passing cloud which shall give place to a brighter sky, and "a light affliction which worketh for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Whether for his faith he be deprived of his property, or banished from his country, immured in a dungeon, or fastened to a stake ; or whether, to try his patience, he be subjected to lingering disease, or distressing agony of body, he is braced to the conflict by the thought, that with the passing away of life, he shall pass into the land where shall be no more pain, and where all shall be joyous reward. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord *from henceforth*," and *immediately*. "Even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them."

Now this consoling declaration being perpetually applicable as long as the world lasts, let us carefully mark the characteristics of those who in every age may take comfort from it. They may not all have conspicuously suffered tribulation ; but they all have their peculiarities which distinguish them from a "world which lieth in wickedness." Their hearts are changed ; their persons are justified ; their souls are sanctified. Their hearts are changed ; they have repented of their sins, and they have been converted unto righteousness. They were once rebellious and estranged from God, having been "born in sin and the children of wrath." But having been born again of the Spirit, they have been made the children of grace and become the obedient subjects of the King of heaven. The eyes of their understanding are enlightened, and they are enabled to see the dreadful nature of sin and to admire the charming beauty of holiness. Their affections are raised from earth to heaven, and transferred from things present to things to come, and their highest hopes and liveliest joys are fixed on things divine, spiritual and eternal. Their persons are justified, or counted righteous before God ; they have perceived their guilt and their consequent exposure to wrath, and "they have fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel ;" they have felt "weary and heavy-laden" with iniquity, and they have gone unto Christ and found rest in Him, and proved His "yoke to be easy, and His burden to be light ;" the Holy Ghost the Comforter whom He promised to send, speaking to their hearts words of peace and giving them a blessed sense of pardon and deliverance. Their souls are sanctified ; they study to have "a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man." They strive to "abstain from all appearance of evil ;" they labour to "keep their hearts with all diligence ;" they pray to "be holy in all manner of conversation and godliness ;" they worship their heavenly Father "in spirit and in truth," and seek to advance His glory with all their soul and strength ; they sit loose to the possessions and pleasures of a world that passeth away, and living as "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," they look forward to another and better country, a home beyond the skies, "a city which hath" eternal "foundations, whose builder and maker is God." And when they finish their course, the voice from heaven declares concerning them—"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth."

This blessedness is accounted for by the responding voice of the Spirit on two principal grounds : "they rest from their labours ;" "their works do follow them." "They rest from their labours." "They rest." Perhaps the whole compass of our language does not contain a word more productive of sweet and soothing associations, than that of rest. It reminds us of a weary traveller, arrived at the termination of a toilsome journey, or of a shipwrecked man, escaped from the raging waves, or of placid infancy reposing on its mother's bosom and sinking into a tranquil sleep. But none of these pleasing images convey an adequate idea of the rest which awaiteth them who die in the Lord. For the rest of the traveller is soon broken and he ere long prepares himself for fresh fatigues ; and the storm-tossed sailor quickly forgets the perils of the deep and embarks again on its treacherous surface ; and, alas ! the infant's repose and serenity are at length at an end, and the toils and troubles and anxious cares of life make their deep furrows on his manly brow. But when "this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality," the spirits of the just shall enter into a rest which shall be undisturbed, "though the hills be removed and the mountains depart" and the visible heavens and earth be no more, and shall continue firm as Jehovah's throne and lasting as the countless ages of eternal

duration. And, oh ! what a blessed rest ! "They rest from their labours;" that is, from all the toils and sufferings and pains and woes of this vale of tears. What a large proportion of our race are doomed to toil and travel incessant, "rising up early, late taking rest, eating the bread of carefulness," and after all distressed by poverty, pinched with want, without comforts for themselves or their children around them, toiling and toiling still, when their strength is almost gone and their soul fainting within them. What a deliverance it will be to be for ever out of the reach of poverty and distress and ceaseless labouring for the means of subsistence, and to be in a region where they "shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more !" They rest from bodily pain and suffering ; and this is an additional blessing of unspeakable value—for our souls are so nearly united to flesh and blood, that it is not possible for the mind to be at perfect ease, while the body is exposed to painful sufferings ; and hence spring the greatest part of the groans and outcries of earth. But in heaven these wailings of woe shall have ceased for ever, and not one painful emotion shall disturb the deep tranquility and serene repose of its joyous inhabitants. No tears shall ever dim their eyes ; no sorrow shall ever cloud their brow ; not a cry of distressing anguish shall ever break in upon the eternal harmony of the songs and harpings of the redeemed, in the mansions of bliss. Oh ! glorious and happy state !—where millions who have dwelt in bodies of pain—the sad inheritance of transgression—shall find every root of sorrow utterly taken away ; their sins, original and personal, entirely cancelled ; their follies and short-comings all forgiven ; their robes "washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb," and no drop of anguish shall remain to be tasted, but they shall drink without interruption of the rivers of pleasure, which are at God's right hand, for evermore ! \*

The other ground on which they who die in the Lord are pronounced blessed, is that "their works do follow them;" or, as the original may be rendered, follow with them or accompany and escort them, the idea presented being that they form a sort of guard to the believer and secure him a magnificent reception in the regions of bliss. We are not indeed hence to infer that any works we do are a passport to glory, for the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers, only through the sufferings and merits of Christ, and nothing that man can do will suffice to atone for transgression and to affect the salvation of a sinner. But the works which emanate from a living faith, have nevertheless an influence on our future happiness, and they will establish our place and rank among the graduated nobility of heaven. If there be gradations among the angelic principalities and powers which surround the throne of God—a thing which we might not only have gathered from the analogy of nature, but which is a matter of express revelation, it is most reasonable to infer that there are gradations too among the departed "spirits of just men made perfect." Nay, we have in Scripture clear intimations of the fact, and I think we are safely borne out by Scripture, in the opinion that these gradations will be entirely regulated by the comparative number and excellence of our works of faith and labours of love while here on earth. And if so, what a splendid inducement to be "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the works of the Lord !" Every struggle to grow in grace, every effort to benefit man, every attempt to honour God, to glorify the Redeemer and to increase the number of His flock, will ensure you a higher elevation in the world of glory. Therefore "be ye instant in season and out of season" at the work which your heavenly Father has given you to do. The sacrifices and exertions you make in the church below will redound to your greater glory and invest you with more abundant wealth in the Zion that is above, and cause you to appear with more eminent lustre among those luminaries of the faith who shall shine in the kingdom of their God as the stars for ever and ever. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. Even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours ; and *their works do follow them.*"

Most applicable are these consoling words to our dear departed sister, whose loss we now deplore. Our loss is her great gain. Attend for a moment to her brief story, especially ye youthful portion of the congregation, that ye may remember the frailty of life and learn to prepare for death. Like the still younger believer, whose death we noticed two months since, her dissolution was brought about by that subtle and wasting malady which carries away so many of our countrymen and countrywomen in their prime. A year ago she was in the bloom of health and strength. But the spoiler came, and ere long announced her for his prey. The bloom gave place to blight, the health to

sickness, the strength to weakness. Change of scene and change of air and society could not repel the ravages of the ruthless invader. But death, though it might at first seem hard to be cut down in her young days, her years having not exceeded twenty, was to her deprived of its bitterest sting. I had many interviews with her, and found her sustained by the living faith which she had early imbibed, and which was fostered and cherished by God's blessing on the means of grace and ordinances of religion which she constantly attended. She was supported by that hope, which is fixed on the Rock of Ages and which we have "as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast"—a hope that "maketh not ashamed" in the day of tribulation, and that, when approaching the mortal struggle, is "full of immortality." She "knew in whom she had believed, and was persuaded that He was able to keep that which she had committed unto Him until that day"—the glorious day of the resurrection morn. When suffering very acute bodily pain, as she latterly did, and occasional trouble of mind, its frequent and scarcely avoidable attendant—a trouble which in her case was increased by the fear that she had not the full measure of faith and patience expected of a true believer in such a situation,—when thus pained in body and distressed in mind, she, I am very happy to say, derived deep consolation and support from my discoursing to her and conversing with her of the sweet and blessed and eternal "rest which remaineth for the people of God." The thought of rest after so many weary days and weary nights and agonizing struggles—of rest in God, of everlasting rest in His immediate presence—rest from trouble of mind, rest from fatigue of spirit, rest from pain—from ceaseless, choking, bitter pain of body—the thought of that rest by divine grace cheered her amid her sorrowful conflict and seemed to give her "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness." During the night preceeding the last Sabbath, this day week, her pain of body became again great and increased to excessive agony, and with it something of that weariness of soul and perplexity of mind already referred to as almost its inevitable consequence. At this, as formerly, she felt a degree of misgiving, not (as we are sure) from any real want of faith, as she being very anxious about the root of the matter might transiently apprehend, but rather from an humble regret at not being able to exercise that perfect patience and resignation which she so deeply aspired after. In this state of mind she was desirous again of seeing the minister of religion, and, I doubt not, of hearing again of that heavenly rest, the words of which had already afforded her so great consolation. Early in the morning before daylight I hastened to answer her call. But before I could reach her dwelling word was brought me that she had gone to hear sweeter sounds than mortal tongue can utter, and had already entered into that rest for which she long had sighed. Oh! most seasonable departure! On the morning of the day of rest, she who sighed for rest found an eternal rest from all her labours. On the dawn of the temporary Sabbath, she passed to the Sabbath that shall last for ever. Many a time did she long for the Sabbath on earth—such was her delight in heavenly exercises! Now she began a Sabbath that will satisfy all her longings and fill her soul with joy amid the sweet melodies and harmonious hosannahs of eternity. Now her soul in its flight could enter into all the spirit of the words:

How dear and welcome, Lord, to me  
Was Thy most holy day!  
But what a Sabbath shall I keep  
For evermore with Thee!

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. Even so, saith the Spirit: for *they rest from their labours.*"

And we may confidently apply to her the sequel of the text—"Their works do follow them." Yes; though brought to an early grave her works do follow her. The example of faith and holiness which she set to equals in years will not be forgotten in the day when God maketh up His jewels. The example of religious diligence which she exhibited in early life—spending her time not in gaiety and frivolity, her day of holy rest not in idleness or amusement, but in the service of her heavenly Master, in attending the courts of His house, in instructing at the Sabbath school, in seeking thus not only to "grow in grace" herself, but to increase the great Shepherd's fold by bringing up the young in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord,"—an example like this exhibited by the young, labours like these performed by the young, besides producing directly good effects, serve to provoke others of the young to love and to good works, and therefore her works will on many accounts follow her to the regions

of glory, and increase the lustre of her imperishable crown. Oh! my young friends, be persuaded to tread in her steps. Instead of giving yourselves to sloth or folly, or worse, on God's holy day, say with the Spirit which animated her as the Sabbaths approached—

These are my preparation days,  
And when my soul is dressed,  
These Sabbaths shall deliver me  
To mine eternal rest.

And then when you come to die—as die you may in a very brief time—we shall have the happiness to apply to you the words we now apply to her—“their works do follow them.” Yea, we shall be able to pronounce over you the double blessing of the text, and to say, with reference to you, “Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord. Even so, saith the Spirit, *for they rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*”

And how consolatory are these words to the mourning relatives of our departed sister, and to all those here present who regret the loss of dear ones that have fallen asleep in Jesus! Your heavenly Father has taken them from the midst of trials and sorrows, and given them a refuge in His own place of rest and safety where temptation and sin can never enter, and where anguish and misery can never come. And oh! what a debt of gratitude do we owe to Him, who by His own dreadful sufferings has opened the kingdom of heaven to believers, and encouraged the desponding sinner to lift up his head with joy! If you think of the sorrows of your dear ones, and are called to suffer yourselves, the contemplation of the terrible agonies He endured for your and their sake should silence your complaints. To think that He who did no sin, submitted to hunger and thirst and weariness—that He became poor and destitute, and had no where to lay His head—that He was insulted and buffeted, His flesh torn with scourges, His temples crowned with thorns, His hands and His feet pierced with nails—that His soul was “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death”—that the conflicts of His spirit forced drops of bloody sweat through every pore of His body, and caused Him at last to give utterance to that wail of unequalled woe, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” O blessed Jesus, what manner of sufferings were these! And what manner of love induced Thee to bear them for us and ours! Oh! when we think of these, let complaint stop her mouth for ever. May we never murmur at “our light affliction!” And may we never forget the endless thanks due to Him who for ours and our children's sake “endured the Cross, despising the shame:” and may we begin on earth the new song which employs the blessed in heaven: “To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, be honour and glory and praise for ever and ever.”

# NOTES OF LECTURES ON PROPERTY AND PAUPERISM.

\* DELIVERED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,

BY THE

REV. THOMAS CHALMERS D.D.

## LECTURE XI.

THE English imagine, that the better state of the Scottish poor depends on our better mode of administering relief; and hence they expect to arrive at the same result, by assimilating the method adopted in England to that pursued in Scotland.\* But it is not by any "cunningly devised" plan,† but by a problem which the population must work themselves, if they would be brought to a state above Compulsory Pauperism. The difference does not lie in the form of the apparatus, or in the construction of canals of supply; but is owing to the people themselves: for their conduct will be regulated by what they have to depend on. It is not by altering the *distribution* of the fund, but by altering the fund *itself*, that Pauperism is to be abolished. The people, becoming habituated to the new state of things, and being thrown back on their own resources, find in them an overpassing compensation for the loss of Compulsory Relief.‡

Now the question presents itself—"How is this national transition to be effected? Is it to be done at once?" I do not advocate that; but I believe the country would bear it; and that, even if Compulsory Relief were suddenly withdrawn, not one instance of starvation would occur. But it is not *per saltum*, but by successive steps, that we wish the transition to be made.

There are two ways of gradualising the process—the Parochial, and the Parliamentary.§ The former I tried in St. John's parish, Glasgow; but found we could get on faster than that method allowed.|| All the present paupers we would see out, in the same sufficiency as before: hence the proposed change does not touch them. But all the new ones we would treat as if there were no compulsory provision at all;—depending only on the plate at the church-door. Let it be understood, that we have henceforth very little to give; and that every application must therefore be strictly scrutinized by the elders of the Kirk-Session. These elders make inquiries as to all the four sources of compensation detailed in our last Lecture.¶ By their going among the people, too, right feeling and delicacy may be instilled into the minds of the latter. The *first* source of compensation ("self-preservation") will provide for half the applicants. Then neighbours should be told, that it is their duty to help those who need it. If these principles, and "relative affection," be well attended to, the *fourth* source of compensation ("sympathy

\* For the Lecturer's "Comparison of Scotch and English Pauperism," see Volume 20 of his Works ("Political Economy," Volume 2), Page 297; or the "Edinburgh Review" for February, 1818. No. 58; Volume 29, Page 261.) In the latter, the article is entitled "Causes and cure of Pauperism."

† "We have not followed *cunningly devised* fables." 2 Peter i. 16.

‡ See Note to Lecture 5, Page 116.

§ These two methods are discussed at length in Chapters 15 and 16 of the "Christian and Civic Economy," Volume 2, Pages 300 and 332. See Volume 15 of Dr. Chalmers's Works ("Christian and Economic Polity," Volume 2), Pages 181 and 205.

|| See Lecture 6, Page 140; and also the following of our author's productions, which are specifically devoted to this point:—1. "Speech delivered May 24, 1822, before the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, explanatory of the measures which have been successfully pursued in St. John's Parish, Glasgow, for the extinction of its Compulsory Pauperism." This pamphlet was afterwards included in Dr. Chalmers's "Speeches and Tracts," and was reprinted in Volume 16 of his Works ("Christian and Economic Polity," Volume 3), Page 141.—2. "Narrative of Eighteen Years Experience in the Parish of St. John's, Glasgow." (See Section 4 of the Lecturer's "Sufficiency of a Parochial System," in Volume 21 of his Works, Page 92.)—3. "Reflections of 1839 on the now protracted experience of Pauperism in Glasgow—an experience which began in 1815, and terminated in 1837." These "Reflections" wind up his "Appendix on Pauperism," in Volume 16 of his Works ("Christian and Economic Polity," Volume 3), Page 422.

¶ See Lecture 10, Page 423.



of the rich") will be found so little necessary, that in four years, among twelve thousand people, I had not occasion to resort to it in twelve instances. Let elders go forth among the districts; and they will find that, for years, no case will be brought before the Kirk-Session. During the first month, we reduced the number of applicants to one-fifth; for many had resources which careless elders did not find out; but when careful inquiry was instituted, such persons forebore to apply. Thus, by seeing out one generation of paupers, who will sink to the grave in the sufficiency of their wonted allowance, you will bring back any parish to the good old way.

The duty of the rich, as connected with the relief of distress, is of so direct and positive a character, as to obtrude itself at once on the notice of the Christian moralist; but the poor also have a duty, which we think of far greater importance to the interests of mankind. Let us just contrast the *rich* man who is ungenerous in his *doings*, with the *poor* man who is ungenerous in his *desires*. There is occasionally to be met with an individual so engrossed with his own interests and sordid gratifications, as to have no spare feeling for the brethren of his common nature. With a heart obstinately shut against the imploring look of distress, and in a tumult of perpetual alarm about new tales of suffering and new plans of philanthropy, he has learned to resist and resent every one of them; and, impatiently spurning the whole away, he, with a countenance of surly determination, firmly defends the close system of his own selfish luxuries, and his own snug accommodations. But all that we lose by this man who is ungenerous in his doings, is the contribution he ought to have rendered to the cause of philanthropy. And it is a loss that can be borne: the cause of beneficence can do abundantly without him. But a far greater mischief is inflicted on that cause by the poor man who is ungenerous in his desires. In his case, every act of kindness is sure to call out the reaction of some new demand, or some new expectation; the hand of a giver, instead of appeasing his wants, inflames his rapacity; and, trading among the sympathies of the credulous, he dextrously appropriates to himself a portion ten-fold greater than would have blest and brightened the aspect of many a deserving family. Him we denounce as the worst enemy of the poor. His ravenous gripe wrests from them a far more abundant benefaction, than does the most lordly and unfeeling proprietor in the land. He is the arch-oppressor of his brethren. The robbery which he has practised upon them is not to be estimated by the alms he has monopolized; by the food, or raiment, or money, which he has diverted to himself, from the more modest sufferers around him. He has done what is infinitely worse than *turning aside* the stream of charity: he has *closed its floodgates*. He has chilled and alienated the hearts of the wealthy. By the poison of distrust and jealousy which he has infused into their bosoms, he has laid an arrest on all the sensibilities that else would have flowed from them. A few such harpies would suffice to exile a whole neighbourhood from the attentions of the benevolent. Ever on the watch and the wing about some enterprise of imposture, he makes it his business to work and to prey on the compassionate principles of our nature. He may, in fact, be said to "grind the faces of the poor"\* with deadlier severity, than the great baronial tyrant, the battlements of whose castle frown, in all the pride of aristocracy, on the surrounding territory. A kindly feeling is ever ready to stream forth, in acts of liberality, on the humbler orders; and it is he, and such as he, who have congealed it. He has raised between the rich and the poor a jaundiced medium, in virtue of which the former eye the latter with suspicion; and there is not a man who wears the garb, and presents the petitions of poverty, who has not suffered from the worthless impostor who has gone before him. The deceit, the indolence, and the low sordidness of a few, have made outcasts of the many; and locked against them, in a kind of iron imprisonment, the feelings of the wealthy. The *rich* man who is ungenerous in his *doings*, keeps back *one* labourer from the field of charity; but the *poor* man who is ungenerous in his *desires*, can expel from it a *thousand* labourers in disgust. He sheds a cruel and extended blight over the fair region of philanthropy; which has been abandoned by many who, but for him, would have fondly lingered there. Had not their simplicity been tried and trampled on, very many would still have tasted the luxury of doing good to the poor; and made it their delight as well as duty to expend and expatiate among their habitations.†

\* Isaiah iii. 15.

† A more extended version of the last paragraph of this Lecture, will be found in the fifth of Dr. Chalmers's "Commercial Discourses." In his collected Works they form the Sixth Volume; of which see Pages 121 to 124.

## THE CONGREGATION OF THE DEAD.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. JOHN CUMMING, D.D.

PREACHED IN EXETER HALL, STRAND,  
ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 5, 1847.

*"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."—Revelation xiv. 13.*

In the course of my expositions of this chapter, I showed you the state of true Christians in the sight of God: "they are without fault before the throne of God;" that is, "there is no condemnation to them; that are in Christ Jesus;" they are "justified" by Him, and have "peace with God." "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." They "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Next, I showed you their practical character upon earth; or the mode in which they developed, in their intercourse with the world, those great Christian principles which they had received through grace: they "followed the Lamb whithersoever He went." I showed you that they followed Him in the great aim and end of His life—in His appeal to the only standard of truth, the Word of God—in His intercourse with the world, sympathising with Him in all His sorrows and reflecting all His joys. You have thus, then, the state of Christians before God—"without fault before the throne;" you have, next, the practical characteristic of Christians—they "follow the Lamb."

Having thus read their biography in life, I would now read and comment upon the epitaph upon their tombstones. Their state is justification before God; their practical character is following the Lamb; and the beautiful epitaph which may be inscribed upon the tomb, and pronounced as the noblest requiem over the ashes of the dead, is—"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

We have here to consider, first, those who are described as "the dead;" secondly, their peculiar and distinctive relationship—"the dead in Christ;" thirdly, the benediction pronounced upon them—"blessed are the dead;" fourthly, the special reason of that blessedness—"they rest from their labours;" and lastly, the evidence of that blessedness—"their works do follow them." Let me endeavour, as fully as the time will permit, to lay before you some remarks upon each of these several divisions into which I have split the text, dwelling rather on its general than on its special prophetic bearing.

#### I. "The dead." Where are they?

My dear friends, has the thought ever struck you, in looking round the world, that its dead outnumber its living? A far greater amount of the population of the globe are beneath the soil, than at any moment there is treading and breathing above it. Our churches, our homes, our thrones, the theatres and playhouses of the earth, are all built upon the dust and ashes of the dead. Nay to use, or borrow, from the poet—"the toe of the dancer"

treads upon the ashes of the dead." This great globe on which we dwell seems to be as much a sepulchre of the dead as it is a home of the living. What are all its graves, but various compartments in this one great mausoleum! The ashes of Abraham mingle somewhere with the ashes of Martin Luther; and the dust of Martin Luther mingles somewhere with that of Napoleon; and the dust of Napoleon may, in a few years, mingle with the dust of a far better man that has recently passed from the stage of life to the stage of glory—Thomas Chalmers. Thus the world is a vast mausoleum; its graves are its chambers, or compartments; and those compartments are not able to prevent the dust of all from mingling together.

But not only the dust of those who never had a quarrel—who lived in friendship, and died in peace,—but the dust of those who were sworn and implacable foes, by a great law must mingle and blend most peacefully together. The ashes of Martin Luther, and of Leo the Tenth, who hated him so heartily—the dust of Wickliffe, and the dust of those who cast his into the stream which bore it to its silent tomb—the dust of John Knox, and that of Queen Mary, must lie right silently and peacefully together. Thus not only the dust of friends, but the dust of bitter foes, as if to cast reproach upon their feuds, must blend and mingle together at the last.

It is now dead dust—it is now disintegrated, mingling with all streams, mixing with all elements, blown by all winds; yet there is not a particle of that dust, incorporated with trees, mingled with the sea, buried in the earth, that shall not hear the first tone of the Resurrection trumpet, and become instinct with a life that can never end; for when the trumpet shall sound, each one that died, whether he died in Christ or not, shall come forth. Some shall rise from the depths of the fathomless sea; some shall cast off their only windingsheet, the sands of the desert, and come. The Pharaohs shall leap forth when they hear that peal, from their pyramidal chambers; the Ptolemies shall start from their marble monuments; Napoleon, and those who fought and fell beneath his banner, at Jena, at Austerlitz, and at Waterloo, shall rise and gather in shivering crowds around him; the dust of Martin Luther shall be quickened at Wirtemberg; Calvin shall rise from his grave, which is now unknown; Oberlin and Felix Neff shall come from their Alpine repose—some rejoicing in the hope of glory, others calling on the hills to cover them, and on the mountains to conceal them, and all gazing into that tremendous infinitude, the eternity that stretches before them.

Brethren, you and I, if we never met in the congregation of the living before, must meet together in the congregation of the dead. Each atom of our dust "rests in hope again to rise;" "for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise." And when we stand upon that vast platform, amid that mighty surging multitude—a multitude more countless than the waves of the sea, or the leaves of the forest, or the sands upon the sea-shore,—and when we take a retrospective view of all we have passed through, how poor and paltry will all things look that we have now fought for, struggled for, spent our health and strength for! My dear friends, seen from the judgment-seat of Christ, crowns will grow pale, coronets will appear denuded of all their attractions, and we shall feel that the gold which we worshipped, instead of being fit to be turned into shrines and gods for us to adore, was only fit to be turned into a pavement on which our feet should trample, in our passage to another and a better and a more glorious repose.

Let me ask you, my dear friends, if you would hope to stand in the congregation of the dead in Christ, are you now in the congregation of the living in Christ? If you would hope to die in Christ, to be accepted by Christ, to be justified through Christ, are you now "without fault before the throne," a follower of the Lamb of God?

II. This leads me to the second point that I wish to consider,—that there are not only "the dead," but distinctively—"the dead in Christ."

There are three expressions used to describe our relationship to Christ. There is, first, to be "without Christ;" that is the state of nature. There is, secondly, to be "in Christ;" that is the state of grace. And there is, lastly, to be

"with Christ:" that is the state of glory. To be "without Christ" is our state by nature; to be "in Christ" is our state by grace; to be "with Christ" is our destiny, our happy destiny, in glory.

I cannot again but notice here, how completely all the distinctions for which we fret, or upon which we pride ourselves, seem to be cast away and utterly unknown, when we stand before the throne of God and the Lamb. It is here implied, that there are but two distinctions upon earth that are real—to be in Christ, or to be out of Christ; and there is not a tombstone in London, on which affection has written its eulogy over the ashes of the beloved dead, if it had the inscription which God would write upon it, that would not record—"Dead in Christ," or "Dead out of Christ." And hence, my dear friends, what is the value of all those distinctions which may be expedient or inevitable, but about which men dispute and quarrel? How startled will the high churchman be at the discovered emptiness of those distinctions in which he gloried! I mean, high churchmen in the popular sense, not in the true sense, for I hold that I am a higher churchman than Dr. Pusey. To be a high churchman is not to measure the church by the height of its steeple, but it is to belong to the congregation of the redeemed. And hence, my dear friends, those who call themselves dissenters adopt a bad name. If it apply to separation from the Establishment, it is of no eternal moment, but if you dissent from the true church, the church of the redeemed, your name is a reproach and a disgrace. But these names, I have said, are all perishable; there are only two distinctions that are eternal. How startled will the dissenter be, to find that his shibboleth was a shibboleth earth-sprung, and that it died on earth, and has no place, or part, or mention at the judgment-seat of Christ! And there, amazed beyond expression, will the Puseyite be, (for I trust that there are some of them, who amid all the rubbish, hold the foundation,) when he discovers that his section gave the fewest number to the church of the redeemed; and that his candelabras, and his genuflections, and his crosses, and his crucifixes, and his altars, were just so much rubbish which he piled upon the true foundation.

And hence, it will not be asked when we stand at the judgment-seat of Christ, *whence* are you?—but *what* are you? It will be no recommendation that you are a churchman—it will be no disqualification that you are a dissenter. These distinctions will have dropped away, and perished in that light in which reality only lives. You may have been, my dear friends, baptised, you may have belonged to the church, you may have been one of its ministers, you may have been a communicant, you may have been a liberal supporter of the church of Christ, and yet not be in Christ. And hence, as I have often said, I believe that what is seen and witnessed in glory will startle and surprise many participants of it. You will miss many a bold professor, whose voice you thought you would hear loudest in the choir of the redeemed, and you will find there many a suspected one, that you in your ignorance shut out, or in your uncharitableness anathematized, highest and brightest in the number of the saved. You may find there some poor tonsured monk, with his shaven crown and rope-girdle, who may have looked in his cell beyond the crucifix which he held in his hand and seen in all His glory the Son of Man nailed to the cross, the only atonement, and have "washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." You may find there some poor Jew, who rejected Jesus of Nazareth, the Saviour, but who, in his deep humiliation, in his sorrow and sighing and crying to be emancipated from his sins and to be at peace with God, may discover that he held the Saviour in substance, while he recollects with sorrow that he repudiated Him in name. We shall find there many that we cast out when we had no business to cast them out; and we shall miss many whom we had no right to number among them at all. All minor distinctions will then be done away; the trappings of rank, the disputes of party, the robes and rules and ceremonies, will all be left behind in the grave, and the only distinction that will appear will be—the living in Christ, or the dead out of Christ.

Then you may ask, (and surely, if you have any interest in your own safety you must ask earnestly,)—"What is it to be in Christ?" The language, my

dear friends, is most expressive. If I were to describe it generally, it would be, to look for salvation through His blood alone, and to feel that if God were to sink me to the depths of everlasting ruin He would not pronounce upon me a sentence greater or more severe than I have deserved, and yet to feel, that if, in the name and through the righteousness of Christ, He were to raise me to a glory too brilliant for mortal eye to look on, and too magnificent for the human mind to conceive, God would not bestow upon me a boon greater than Christ's merits entitle me to. To be in Christ, if I may paraphrase it, is to feel that Christ paid all we owed to God, and purchased for us far more than God owed to us—that He is the only way to know God, and the only way for God to know us—that He is the only channel for us to reach God, or for God to come down to us; it is to feel that Christ's sacrifice is the only atonement for sin, and that it is not only access to God, provided by Infinite Wisdom, but that it is the expression of God's love to us. Our Saviour is precious, not simply as making it possible for God to forgive us, (just as it is made possible for the queen of England to forgive the sentence of a convict, and to remit it,) but as it is made evident that God will not merely forgive us, and leave us to live the lives of forgiven convicts, at a distance, but that He will take us to His bosom as justified, and redeemed, and converted, and adopted sons.

Now the expression "in Christ" is a very peculiar one; and I am quite sure that you may see, by the simple contrast which I will make, that it is not an ordinary expression denoting that we are to follow Christ. You never say that a pupil is in his teacher, a patient in his physician, a son in his father, or a servant in his master; you say, the pupil follows his teacher, the patient follows his physician, the son follows his father, the servant serves his master. Then if the expression "in Christ" is constantly employed in Scripture, if (as it were) the ordinary phraseology of life is outraged by a strange and uncouth expression of relationship, are we not warranted in inferring, that there is something more in it than the Socinian means by following Christ? The Scriptures generally employ plain language; and when strange expressions are used, it is to describe a doctrine that is strange, because far above humanity. It is one of a series of phrases allusive, I believe, to known symbols. If I look in my Bible I find, that all in the ark were saved, while all out of it were lost. What would have been the use of any antediluvian sinner, a strong swimmer, following the ark? He might swim for a few hours, but it would not be long before he sank. Now an antediluvian sinner following the ark by swimming is just like a Socinian sinner trying to be saved by merely following Christ. Then look at the city of refuge. The manslayer outside might be smitten down and destroyed, but the moment he got inside he was safe. While the criminal pursued by the avenger of blood was rushing to the city of refuge, if he was caught on his way to it he would be slain, but the instant he got into it he would be safe. Thus following Christ is not enough; you must be in Christ, as the criminal was in the city of refuge, and Noah and his family were in the ark; and then the winds may blow, and the waters may rise, or the avenger may pursue, but "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

My dear friends, are you in this state? Are you, not believers in Christ as a teacher, but "in Christ" as your glorious sacrifice, your eternal Refuge, your Priest, your Altar, your all? Are you connected with Him as the branch is connected with the vine—united to Him, incorporated with Him, one with Him, in life, in death, and in eternity? Union with Christ is not a mere figure of speech—it is not a metaphor,—it is a reality: so much so that whatever I do is done through Christ's life pervading me. If I lift my hand to the right or to the left, upwards or downwards, it is in virtue of that life which is in my body; and if I give a penny to the poor, or subscribe to a school, or do any other good work, it is in virtue of that life which is implanted in my soul by Christ, and which enables me to say with the apostle—"I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Do you believe that? Can you feel that to be a reality? Can you peril your everlasting prospects upon it? If you are so, blessed are you when living, and blessed shall you be when dead; if you are not so, you

may be churchman or dissenter, you may be what you like or what you please—unhappy are you in life, and unhappy will you be in death,—you are out of Christ.

III. This leads me, in the third place, to refer to the benediction that is pronounced upon those who are here said to be in Christ.

Then if the dead in Christ be blessed, they do not cease to be. Some Christians have got the idea, (and I think it is a very absurd one,) that there is a cessation of life at death till the resurrection day—that when we die we cease to be until the body is raised again from the dead. Certainly there is no warrant for this in Scripture. Could you say they were “blessed” that ceased to be? If a dog had an idea of heaven, it would be plenty to eat and drink, and nothing to disturb him. If that were heaven, then I could conceive the blessing pronounced to apply to it. But I consider the idea of heaven to be a very different thing to that. I cannot conceive of happiness without conscious life. Annihilation is not blessedness. The elevation of mind, the expansion of intellect, the enlargement of all the powers, the removal of the shackles that confine them, and the giving of the soul unfettered wing, to soar and revel in this unceasing life, and approach evermore to God without cessation—this is happiness. But we believe that “absent from the body” is “present with the Lord.” An apostle said this by the inspiration of that Lord, and we must believe it. They are, then, “blessed,” that thus “die in the Lord;” and to be so they must live.

When a Christian dies, the eye of the mourner looks on the pale face of the dead and weeps; for there is nothing on earth so unnatural as a dead face. Death is not natural—it is most unnatural—it was never meant to be—it is an infraction of the laws of God’s universe; and the dead pale face always seems to me to reflect and to have on it the lesson—“The wages of sin is death.” The weeper looks upon that face and weeps, but the Christian looks beyond the ashes of the dead, follows the emancipated soul, as it rises in outspread and untiring wing, and exclaims—“Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.” In the case of a Christian, the scythe of death cuts down nothing but what he would leave behind; it merely cuts down the restrictions and the limits that repressed, that the disenthralled and emancipated spirit may soar and rise to God, as its eternal home.

“Blessed,” then, “are the dead which die in the Lord.” Often have they been cursed when living; but here we read, they are “blessed” when dead. They had many an obstruction on earth. No man ever did anything that was good, without meeting with terrible obstructions. The price you must pay for every kindness you bestow is ingratitude; and the idea of a vicarious sacrifice or suffering seems to be perpetuated still,—one generation suffering, that their successors may have privilege or happiness or peace; and when the noblest deeds were done, and the holiest lessons taught, the greatest persecutions then broke forth. But the anathema of the world never put down or scathed the children of God. It made them rise with a greater energy, and gave to their spirits a nobler elasticity, and made their high souls capable of more heroic enterprises. In fact, persecution never yet, in the history of humanity, put down a good cause, and it never built up a bad one. It is a law which God himself has made, that the arrow which is shot from the persecutor’s bow rebounds and pierces the persecutor’s heart. And hence, if the sword and the faggot are ever to be employed in our warfare, let the one be unsheathed and the other kindled by the foes, not by the friends of Jesus Christ. The cause of Christ disclaims them. “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual, and mighty through God.” But if they have been accused of man, they that “die in the Lord” are “blessed” of God. We may have lost the dead, and they are lost to us; but they are joined to God, to happiness, and to heaven. When I stand over the ashes of the dead; amid all the freezing doubts that the sceptic would cast, like cold shadows, upon the grave—amid the torn feelings that relationship is conscious of—amid the din and noise of the wheels of this world, I can hear piercing the firmament, and reverberating from the cold dark

chamber below, the "still small voice"—"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

They are "blessed," for none can effectually condemn them. Memory may condemn, the law may condemn, Satan may accuse, conscience may smite. But it is only for a moment, for "it is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again."

They are "blessed," for they are removed from all evil. They are in the realms of infinite purity. No corruption can stain them, no iniquity vex them, no foul pollutions defile them; they can neither be tempted, nor tried, nor suffer any more. The door that shuts the believer in the realms of glory, shuts out all sin and sorrow for ever.

They are "blessed," for there will be there the restoration of suspended intercourse with those they loved. Venerable fathers whom they bore to the tomb, will meet them there—their grey heads literally "a crown of glory." The babe that dropped from thy bosom, O Christian mother, like a premature fruit from the tree of life in spring, will meet thee enshrined in glory. The cherished friends you loved, and the broken circles which you deplored, will gather around you; and they will appear no longer capable of misconstruction, or open to any of the imperfections common to humanity. Perfect happiness and perfect purity shall reign there. There will not be a spot upon which you will be able to lay the finger and say—"Here I suffered." The names "widow" and "orphan" shall not be mooted in heaven, or recorded in the vocabulary of the blessed. Not a tear is shed there, not a sorrow felt; all is happy, because all is holy; and over the fairest and most fragrant blossom hangs the superscription of "eternal." They are "for ever with the Lord:" in Christ upon earth, and "with the Lord" in heaven.

IV. It is added, as an explanation of this blessedness—"They rest from their labours."

You recollect the passage—"There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God." In the original the passage reads—"There remaineth therefore a *sabbatismos* for the people of God," literally translated, "a sabbath-keeping." Though another word is used, yet we may read it, "they *sabbatise* from their labours, and their works do follow them." In other words, heaven is not the Pagan elysium, or the Mahometan paradise, but a glorious rest, an everlasting sabbath, for the people of God. And by a strange contradiction it is said—"And they rest not day and night." They "rest," and yet they "rest not." It is a place of endless repose, and yet a place of endless activity. Their energy is their enjoyment. Our sabbaths upon earth ought to be (as they were meant to be) shadows cast upon the world, as from above, foretastes of the great sabbaths of eternity. I look upon the sabbath as a kind of bivouac preparatory to the battle of the week, an occasional respite from Cæsar, preliminary to the everlasting sabbath that will be enjoyed by the people of God. I look on it as a beautiful island cast into the roaring and restless torrent of immortality; and standing upon that island, you can look at the rush, and listen to the din of the eddying world, and see leaping from above in undimmed splendours the sunshine of heaven, and hear from afar the unspent chimes of the unutterable glory. The sabbath is too precious to be given up; humanity will not surrender it, Christianity will not let it go. It will be revered by the Christian, as long as the world shall last. The poor man would be the greatest sufferer, were there no sabbath. What! would you give up that blessed day of jubilee, on which the highest and lowest can meet together in the house of God, and say—"We are peers;" when the rich and the poor can meet together, and feel that ennobling and kindling sentiment of a common brotherhood—"The Lord is the maker of us all?" Part with your beautiful cathedrals, but part not with your precious sabbath. Man built the cathedral, God hallowed the sabbath; the one might be a loss of the beautiful and the bright—the other would be a loss of the essential. Architects can build new

and better cathedrals—princes cannot make the sabbath. Make your sabbaths on earth, my dear friends, to be cherished by all that are dear to you, and your sabbaths in glory will be a “rest from your labours.”

What is the way to get the sabbath best observed? I think the interference of legislation is a good method; but it seems very strange to me, that the christians of this country should be always bothering the House of Commons about these matters, when they hold the matter in their own hands. Make your sabbaths what they ought to be, and the legislature must make them so too; and I trust the day will soon dawn upon the world, when in the reflection and repercussion of all that is around us, sabbaths beautiful in your homes, sabbaths beautiful in your streets, sabbaths hallowed in your sanctuaries, will make sabbaths felt and hallowed in the House of Commons, and senators will not dare to utter one word tending to their desecration.

V. But it is added, that “they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.”

What a precious truth is this! “Their works do follow them!” If a Romanist had written this, it would have been, ‘their works precede them;’ but because God has written it, we see that evangelical religion is true, for—“their works do follow them.” In other words, our works do not go before us to heaven, because we enter there through grace; “our works do follow us,” as the retinue that speaks to the universe, that we have brought forth the fruits of the Holy Spirit of God. We are admitted into heaven because of Christ’s righteousness; we are seen to be fit for heaven by the fruits we have brought forth. His righteousness imputed is our title—the Spirit’s righteousness imparted is our qualification—Christ’s work our right—the Spirit’s work our fitness—and the fruits we bring forth, the evidence of both. Our works, then, do not precede us—they follow us. The only thing that goes before us to heaven is the Lamb; “these are they that follow the Lamb;” and the only things that come after us are our *works*. Thus you go to heaven between two; Christ the King of glory precedes you, to open its gates for all believers—the good you have done following after you, to give evidence, from the light that is reflected from behind, that you belong to the company of the redeemed, and are children of God.

Take care, then, you do not let these interchange places. When you hear persons say, that we evangelical ministers are against good works, tell them it is a complete misconception. I insist upon good works and almsgiving to every Christian cause—clothing the naked—feeding the hungry—circulating the Bible—aiding missions, just as strongly as any human being can insist upon them; but then I do not invert the pyramid, and make it stand upon its apex instead of its base—I put them in their right place, Christ before, and the works afterwards. If you follow the works, you will be found among those to whom Christ shall say—“I know you not;” but if they follow you, you will be following Him who gave the works all their life and beauty, and you all your title.

What a beautiful and blessed thing is the Gospel of Jesus! Precious is the Bible—more precious still the Gospel it contains; precious are our sabbaths—more precious still the everlasting sabbath. Love the Gospel; live under the influence of the Gospel; spread the Gospel; if needs be, die rather than part with the Gospel. It teaches us to live,—it teaches us peacefully to die. An aged Christian’s death has no terror in it—scarcely a cloud on it; it is that beautiful evening twilight, that mingles so imperceptibly with the twilight of the eternal morn, that the night between is scarcely felt. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

My dear friends, have you any interest in this? Can you say, I have settled my affairs on earth, I have resigned my body to the grave, I have committed my children to the everlasting Father, and my soul to Christ, who bought me and made me His child?

[\*• The Prime Minister and his Lady attended Divine worship at Exeter Hall, on Sunday week, December 12.]



## THE CHOICE OF MOSES.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. DANIEL MOORE, M.A.

PREACHED IN CAMDEN CHURCH, CAMBERWELL,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, DEC. 19, 1847.

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*"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."*—Hebrews xi. 24—26.

It falls to the lot of few men to pass through life without experiencing one painful form of perplexity, namely, an apparent opposition between their duty and their interest, between their comforts and their conscience—the lawful claims of station appearing to draw them one way, the imperious commands of God enjoining them to take another.

Now I call this an *apparent* opposition, because it is manifest that it can be nothing else. God is too wise and too holy ever to permit any real opposition to exist between our obedience and our happiness. And, therefore, if it ever appear that you may advance your earthly interests by infringing the least of God's commands, be assured that you have fallen into one of two mistakes; either you misinterpret the law of God, or you know not wherein your own happiness consists.

An instance of a man placed in this apparent difficulty is brought before us in the text. The text tells us how he got out of it. The general circumstances of the history to which it refers will be familiar. The children of Israel who remained in Egypt after the death of Joseph, increased so rapidly as to excite the jealousy of the Egyptian king, insomuch that he dealt subtly with them, and "evil entreated" them; but the more he afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew, until at last, urged on by his own ungovernable passions, and with a heart "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin," he issued the savage edict, that every male child should be sacrificed at its birth. At this period Moses was born. For a time—for three months—he escaped this savage decree through the artful concealment of a pious mother. At length, however, further concealment became impossible; it was evident to her that her child must fall a victim even as others, unless, when her strong faith should cast her infant upon the waters, he should be saved by the interfering hand of an overruling God. On this bold step she decided. She prepares for the infant an ark of bulrushes; she lays the cradle in the flags which grew by the river side; she bids the child's elder sister stand a little way off to watch the issue of this perilous experiment. Ay, brethren, but there was One nearer to that child than the sister was: He who "is not far from every one of us," He "whose eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good," had fixed His pitying gaze on that ark of bulrushes; He saw therein the future deliverer of the Jewish nation—the blessed type of Him who should come to deliver the world.

The sequel of this history you know. The daughter of Pharaoh comes down to the brink of the water. Her eyes being caught by the sight of this cradle in the river, she is moved with compassion at the thought of the infant

about to be sacrificed, and she gives command that it may be taken up, and consents to adopt the child for her own; and then, as a nurse was needed for that child, she is unwittingly led to the selection of the child's own mother.

Brethren, I pause for one important reflection. Here is a reflection which should touch to the quick the soul of every parent, and especially of every mother, among you. Moses, at birth, was designed for moral greatness; Moses, no doubt, would in one form or another, have been qualified for the part which he had to sustain in the world; but that which I entreat you to notice is, the agency selected of God to form the future character of Moses. Mark who, and who alone, was to lay the foundations of religious truth, to fortify the heart with holy principles, to instil into the infant soul of that child such deep love for God, that neither the honours of royalty, nor the pleasures of wealth, nor the seductions of a court, nor the reproach of the cross, could ever afterwards move him from his purpose. This agency, I say, was the teaching of a pious mother. To her, and to her alone, as far as the Scriptures enable us to judge, was committed the important work of forming the future character of this man of God. By the purity of her precepts, by the holiness of her example, by the fervour of her prayers, was she so to mould the mind of her son, that when he came to years he should "refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter," and "choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

The points to which I desire to direct your attention, in connection with this narrative, are, first, the choice of Moses; and, secondly, the principles which enabled him to form it.

I. The choice of Moses is here presented to us under three distinct aspects. First, we find him preferring a low estate to princely dignity; he would rather be considered a despised Israelite, than be "called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Then he is represented as preferring suffering with righteous men to the society of the ungodly; he would endure "affliction" with God's people rather than "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." The last aspect of his choice which is exhibited to us is, that he preferred "reproach" with a good conscience, to rank and wealth and dignity and ease with a bad one; he "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt."

Now the first feature of Moses' choice to which I desire to direct your attention, is his voluntary renunciation of rank, and dignity, and worldly office. Let me observe here that we are not called upon to despise these things. We are, indeed, taught not to seek for greatness; but still we are not told to despise greatness when it is thrust upon us. The providence by which Moses was thrown into a palace was evidently one beyond his own controul. Without consent he had become the heir presumptive to a throne; without his own will he had been surrounded by all the fascinations of an Egyptian court; and, having been from his youth inured to flattery, and trained to learning, and qualified, both by natural and acquired endowments, for the discharge of the future duties of his station, I think we should all have found a ready justification for Moses if he had chosen to abide in the state in which the providence of God had placed him. We should have said, 'To remain there was but an act of gratitude to his kind benefactress, who had snatched him from a watery grave; to remain there would have given him an opportunity of employing the influence he had obtained in mitigating the sufferings of his people; to remain there might, if his influence increased, and if he should gain the ascendant over the mind of Pharaoh, be the means of introducing into an idolatrous court the worship of the true God.' These were all lawful considerations; yet they were despised.

From the first, it would seem, Moses had resolved upon quitting the court of Egypt, and renouncing his reputed connection with the family of Pharaoh. He determined that he would not conceal his obscure and lowly parentage. While servants were waiting upon him, and courtiers were bowing the knee to him, he boldly avowed that he was a child of that despised race whom the meanest vassal of the court of Pharaoh thought himself at

liberty to insult. Now this was the first trial of the steadfastness of Moses, the first to which was to be applied the efficacy of a mother's teaching and a mother's prayers. Pride of high birth, and shame of low birth, although in themselves, perhaps, the most imbecile and contemptible and selfish of human weaknesses, are, notwithstanding, of all weaknesses the most difficult to subdue. Therefore, I say, it argued a noble superiority to this form of prejudice when Moses, while yet a youth, could say, "Clothe me with purple if you will, salute me with titles if you will, hold before me a crown if you will—I will allow of no better origin than that of a descendant of those poor labourers who are slaving at yonder kiln, those who are now beaten by cruel taskmasters, those who are called upon to bring their daily tale of bricks: these are my people, these are my father's house."

But this attachment to his people was soon to be put to a much severer test. A naked avowal of his connection with the Jews, would have been but a poor proof of love. He must now shew his sympathy with them by a readiness to suffer for them, by a preparedness to cast in his lot with their fallen fortunes, to stoop beneath the same afflicting yoke which had bowed down his people's neck.

Hence, the second aspect of the choice of Moses is, his preference of suffering with the people of God to "the pleasures of sin" in the society of the ungodly. The account we have of this, as given in the Old Testament, is simply that he went out among his brethren for the purpose of looking upon their burdens. No intimation is given that he was compelled to bear part in their severe labours, but his active sympathy with them soon involved him in a quarrel which led to the most serious consequences. On one occasion, when he had gone out, he interfered to avenge the wrongs of one of his countrymen, and in the course of the strife he took away the life of the oppressor. This fact soon became known, and being whispered in the ears of the jealous princes of Egypt, it became needful that Moses should quit the court and go to the land of Midian. And at this part of the life of Moses, brethren, I exhort you to notice a noble instance of godly magnanimity; I exhort you to observe an example of the way in which a God-fearing man will breast the full tide of coming calamity, and accommodate himself at once to altered circumstances of life. I note this the more, brethren, because we have had some wrecks of late among our great ones, and each one, as he met his fellow in the Exchange or the Mart, has exclaimed, "How are the mighty fallen!" I ask, whether any one of them have met their change of circumstances like Moses? Behold him in one day reduced from affluence to poverty, from dignity to meanness, from all the flattery and honour and wealth and attention which he had found in an Egyptian court, to the lowly occupation of tending a few flocks of sheep. He might naturally have repined; but so far from repining at his altered circumstance, he became attached to his new occupation. He remains for forty years in the lowly and unobtrusive condition of a shepherd; and even, when at last, the voice from the burning bush sends him forth to deliver his people, so reluctant does he appear to reassume the reins of greatness that he would prefer to remain in the wilderness with his flock.

Now it may be well to note two influencing considerations which the apostle puts down in the text, as having in some degree determined the choice of Moses in this particular. The first was, that in the midst of his affliction, and sorrow, and exile, he should always have the comfort of knowing that he was with the people of God. The choice was to be made. Was it fitting that he should remain in the court of Egypt, where the name of God was blasphemed, where the people of God were spoken against, where the worship of God was superseded by idolatry offered to creatures that crawled on the banks of the Nile; or was it better that he should take up his humble lot with a pious man of God, that he should go and be a servant in some place where morning by morning he might join in holy worship, have an opportunity of conversing with a holy man, on the mysterious providence which had brought him there, and, while tending his flock in the wilderness, give a few moments to meditation and silent prayer? Oh! brethren, better is it to be a doorkeeper, a shepherd,

a servant in the house of God, and in the company of God's people, than to dwell in the courts of princes..

But the apostle notes another consideration, which appears to have influenced the choice of Moses, and that is, that whatever might be the pleasures of the Egyptian court they were short-lived, they were "the pleasures of sin for a season." This is an important consideration for ourselves. Whatever delight we may find in the society of the ungodly, we must remember that on all worldly delights this superscription is written—"They are but for a season." You may listen to the songs of the thoughtless, you may join in the dance of the worldly, you may laugh at the wit of the scorner, you may be a spectator at the mimic pastimes of the godless, but remember that for all these things conscience will afterwards bring you to judgment. Yes, even in this life, conscience will force upon you some painful after-thoughts. You must have something to fill up that aching void of spirit, which follows when the music is still, the dream vanished, and the thoughtful solitude sits in judgment on the relics of the finished revel. Oh! brethren, if men could but realise the moral of this one thought, there is in it philosophy enough to "turn" every "sinner" from "the error of his ways," and every worldly man from his present pursuits. Who would eat the fruit, to know that he should find ashes at the core? Who would taste of the cup, to find that at its bottom there was the sediment of poison? And yet, I ask, what is the judgment which conscience passes upon worldly pleasures, but that they are ashes and poison to the soul? The pageant, the delusion, the trick of sin must pass away, and what then presents itself to the eye of the thoughtful, reflecting soul? Oh! there is the sight of the broken law, there is the face of the slighted Saviour, there is the prospect of the coming reckoning, there is the thought that the summer is past, the autumn ended, and that we "are not saved."

Nor does the apostle's remark apply more to the direct pleasures of sin than to what are supposed to be the venial delights of the world. Indeed the latter would seem to be more especially pointed at in the case of Moses. What he had to dread was not so much the commission of direct sin as the evil which would accrue to his soul from daily association with the ungodly. Now mark this, brethren. There are professing Christians, in this our day, who think very lightly of this form of evil. There are who think that they can touch pitch without being defiled; there are, who suppose that they may join in all the frivolities of the world without weakening the tone of their piety, without any dissipation of their holier and better thoughts. without experiencing, on their return to the closet, any interference with the calm pleasures of devotion. I say, they tell us so now—will they so say when, in the view of the eternal world, they come to put side by side the self-denial of the godly man and those worldly "pleasures" which are but "for a season?"

But a third feature of the choice of Moses was, his preference of reproach to riches, of consistency to honours, and of a good conscience to a good fortune. He "esteemed the reproach of Christ." Many different interpretations have been given to this expression, which, as applied to an Old Testament saint, stands almost alone. As usual, however, the more obvious interpretation will be found to agree best with the context. The object of the apostle is to show the essential oneness of God's truth through all the dispensations which He hath ever given to the world; to show to these converted Hebrews, that as "God manifest in the flesh" Christ had been in all ages the life, soul, confidence, of the believing church. And, therefore, that which we here understand by "the reproach of Christ" is anything which a godly man may have endured, under any dispensation of religion, for the sake of that God in whom he lived, and that Saviour for whose coming he looked. From Abel, the first martyr, down to Stephen, the last, we are to remember that the object of all confidence was—"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." In Him all hope centred, from Him all succours were expected to flow, for Him all reproach was to be borne; and, therefore, we speak of Moses as bearing "the reproach of Christ," whenever he rendered services, or endured afflictions, or gave up delights, in consequence of his steadfast adherence to the worship of the true God. Still it is possible that the remark of the apostle may point

more especially to reproach and scorn, which the godly man may have to encounter from the world, in consequence of a bold and consistent profession. In this very chapter we find the apostle has numbered among the sore trials of the saints, that they had to bear "cruel mockings;" and David speaks of the "reproach" of the wicked as having "broken his heart." You will remember too, that it is given as a proof of our Lord's meekness, that "when He was reviled, He reviled not again." To this particular form of suffering for conscience' sake the text has special reference. Moses, however, could have escaped all such suffering, and retained the pleasures of Egypt too. But he preferred to endure reproach. Neither the frowns of the world, nor its smiles were to be put in competition with that calm sense of God's approval, and with those sweet delights of conscience, which tell us, that although now we are called upon to bear the cross of Christ before men, hereafter we shall wear the crown of Christ in the presence of all holy beings.

II. But let us come to the second division of our subject; and notice, briefly, what it was that enabled Moses to make such a choice as this. "By faith," the apostle begins; faith, that mighty spiritual faculty which it had been the object of the entire chapter to exalt, and which he had adduced so many testimonies to show had ever been the means of the believer's conquest over the world. Now this faith is the means by which the benefits of Christ's mediation are brought into effectual contact with the human soul. But, as applied to the case of Moses, it may be sufficient if we glance at it under two aspects, considering it first as it supposes an accurate knowledge of the Divine will, and next as it supposes an implicit dependence upon the Divine promises.

Now, in order to his exercising this faith, it is clear that Moses must have had a knowledge of God, of His law, and His perfections—and also of man's fallen estate; he must have known of man's need of pardon, and of holiness; and he must have known also that means had been provided of God by which He might become reconciled to a lost and guilty world. Whence could Moses have had this knowledge? By the exercise of his natural faculties we are sure he could not have obtained it. "The world by wisdom" never did "know God," and never can know Him. Still less likely is it that he should have been taught these lessons by those with whom he associated at the court of Pharaoh, seeing that they belonged to a nation which set up as objects of worship the most revolting creatures under heaven. We come again, then, to the only human teacher that Moses could ever have had to instruct him in the truth of God, namely, his pious mother. By her, no doubt, he was instructed in the mystery of man's fall, and the appointed method of his recovery through the intervention of a Mediator. We may not suppose that there would be permitted in the palace of Pharaoh the offering of daily sacrifices; but we can well understand how this mother in Israel would point out to her infant son the standing usage of his nation, whereby, from their earliest years, they were taught to see and feel that without shedding of blood there could be no remission of human guilt, that without faith in a Saviour to come there could be no approach to God. And as she could thus instruct him in the doctrines of religion, so, we may be well assured, would she carefully fortify his mind with those principles of practical conduct which should guide him in after life. Can we not imagine the time come when this holy woman must take her leave of Moses—when, there being no more use for her hired services, she must leave her child to the seductions of an Egyptian court? Would she not say to him then, 'Knowest thou not what mysterious providence hath brought thee hither? Once thou wert doomed to die, and yon stream was to have been thy sepulchre; but He who is the Lord of death rescued thee from the tyrant's power, and gave me back my child. For this it has been that I have ever taught thee in all thy ways to acknowledge Him, through whose wise and overruling providence thou that wert lost art found again, thou that wert dead art alive. And now I am about to leave, and thou wilt have other friends to love and other examples to imitate. Remember, thou hast the same conscience to follow, the same God to trust. Expect not thou art about to enter on an easy path.

Temptation will assail thee on every hand; luxury will seduce thee, learning will flatter thee, wealth will invite thee, sin will solicit thee. Do thou, O man of God! flee these temptations. Know that no unsanctified enjoyment can last. The pleasures of sin are but for a season; and bitter is the sting which they leave behind. Therefore learn to endure hardness, to choose adversity, to esteem lightly of reproach. Remember that religion's worst is better than the world's best. The gold of Egypt will change, its fine gold will become dim, but when every other treasure is gone, thou shalt have a better treasure in the smile and the favour of God.

And as we may thus account for that form of the faith of Moses which enabled him to understand his duty, so we may well suppose that he would grow up in implicit dependence upon those promises which had been unfolded to his infant mind. When Abraham was called to leave his home, he obeyed, not knowing whither he went; and so when Moses was compelled to turn his back on the land of Egypt, he also trusted in the directing power of God. He went to Midian; and there, we are told, he sat down by a well. Oh! what would be his thoughts as he sat there? He would think of his mother. God's past love to his soul would be the ground of his faith and encouragement. 'What!' he would say, 'hath God delivered me from the waters, hath He snatched me from the hands of a tyrant, hath He rescued me from a cruel and ungrateful nation, and will He forsake me now? No; "the Lord will provide;" how I know not; where I know not; but I have learnt to endure persecution, as "seeing Him who is invisible"—I have an eye to "the recompence of the reward."'

And this, I would observe, is the last influencing consideration which appears to have operated upon the choice of Moses—namely, that he still looked forward to that recompence which awaits the persecuted people of God when they come to heaven. You know, brethren, in what sense the term "reward" is ever used in Scripture. You will not mistake it for the price of labour; you will not look upon it as a compensation for suffering endured; you will not suppose that it is in the form of an equivalent for any poor obedience rendered by you. No; the term is used in merciful condescension to us, as giving us a motive to holy perseverance. It is a gracious form of encouragement invented by the Father of our spirits to stimulate our efforts, to comfort us in suffering, to refresh us when we are weary, and to support us when we are faint. To this end it is, that God is graciously pleased to give us glimpses of the invisible world. "Through a glass darkly," the persecuted and suffering Christian is allowed to see shadows of the uncreated glory. He is led by faith into a world where he shall neither fall nor falter again, where sin is not known, where sorrow is not felt, where spiritual graces never languish, where he can never die, where the presence of God and of the Lamb creates an everlasting brightness, and where he is assured of an everlasting "recompence of reward."

Such, brethren, is the choice of Moses; and such are a few of the considerations by which he was induced to make it.

One word only, in conclusion. Think you that Moses now repents his choice? Is he sorry that he gave up "the treasures of Egypt?" Does he repine at the lost dignity of being called "the son of Pharaoh's daughter?" Is he grieved that he cast in his suffering lot with God's people? Is he a loser by any or by all of the earthly sacrifices which he made? You one and all answer, 'No.' Conscience well approves the choice of Moses. We now put a question to you. If you on earth approve the choice of Moses, does Moses in heaven now approve of yours? If not, go home and ask the help of God's Spirit this night to enable you to make a new, a happy, a better, a more enduring choice. Choose now; choose whilst time and opportunity are given you to choose, before "the evil days come." Choose to come out of Egypt, and be not "partaker of her plagues." Yes, choose while the Father calls, while the Spirit pleads, while Christ holds out to you the eternal "recompence of reward;" choose ye that better part which shall not be taken from you.

NOTES OF LECTURES  
OR  
PROPERTY AND PAUPERISM.  
DELIVERED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
BY THE  
REV. THOMAS CHALMERS D.D.

LECTURE XII.

COMPASSION is a feeling excited by the miseries of others, prompting to their relief, and gratified by rescuing its objects from suffering. But there are other feelings which may prevent its exercise. Thus, if the pain endured be a punishment, justice keeps compassion in check; or if it be from a salutary operation, though you may *feel* like children, you do not *act* like children. Or it may be a chastisement; and then although to be unmoved by the distress would be a revolting character, yet the character is heightened if compassion be brought under controul to a regard for the higher interest of the sufferer. A man without compassion we regard in the same light as an evil spirit; but it does not follow that we should admire him alone who has the instinct without the intelligence.

There is no agony that draws forth more compassion than hunger. It is not in nature to withstand it. There may be the suspicion of imposture; and little do the poor know how they are injured by those who practise it. But, apart from this, there is no standing out against the claims of hunger. If the law were to prescribe it as a punishment, it could not be carried into effect, for want of agents. The poorest would rise in rebellion; and the law would be defeated, as it ought to be, by the compassion of others.

Nothing is clearer than the duty of Christ's disciples to follow out this feeling of compassion. It is a higher virtue still, that, instead of waiting till misery is presented, goes in search of it;—not only *consents* but *offers* to relieve:—not only *obeys* but *originates* plans of relief. Now we want a plan to *relieve* the *present* distress, and *prevent* the *future*. We set before us the suffering which *is*, or which *is to be*; and in both, compassion has its proper and congenial object. But a *plan* appeals to the *understanding* as well as the *heart*. It may slacken the preventives of suffering; it may separate the rich more widely from the poor; it may *stifle* instead of *softening* the feelings; and may divert the stream into a pit which is bottomless;—stopping up all the rills which refresh society. There may be a man who partakes in all the sympathies of our nature, and yet is so satisfied of there being a sufficient relief for the distress, that he deprecates legal and municipal interference. He is not hostile to commerce, though he advocates Free Trade.\* He is not hostile to benevolence, though he deprecates its being chilled into a statue, by the hand of legislation. He may be wrong; but it is not his heart, but his understanding that is in fault. If he be charged with insensibility because he does not like the system, it is a calumny. He only resists the encroachments of "the wisdom of men" on "the wisdom of God."† But the torch of truth is often exchanged for the firebrand of discord; and argument degenerates into recrimination. Evil is then called good; ‡ and men are charged with being enemies to benevolence, who have endeavoured to clear away all its entanglements.

\* For a Note (F.) on this subject, which now excites so much interest, see the Appendix to Dr. Chalmers's "Political Economy," Page 617; or Volume 20 of his works, Page 37.

† 1 Corinthians ii. 5 and 7

‡ "Woe unto them that call evil good"—Isaiah v. 20

"Then Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and said—'I have compassion on the multitude; because they continue with Me now three days and have nothing to eat.'" (Matthew xv. 32.) The people were in a solitary place, and were overtaken with hunger. We learn the effect of their suffering on the Saviour. With respect to the origin of ~~that~~ suffering, there might have been culpable want of foresight, in abandoning their work from curiosity, or in expectation of a miracle. No matter! Here is the multitude in distress; it is the topic and the terror of all; and the cries of famishing children give authentic signs of nature in extremity. Did it suggest to our Saviour, any calculation of causes and consequences? None that we hear of. Did He think of their past conduct, or their future unbelief? Did He make any distinction; or did any science interfere in the distribution? No! He felt the urgency of the call; and, without delay or discrimination, He provided food for all.

So may it be in the present day. Sudden distress may occur; we may feel as He felt; and, as far as possible, we should act as He acted. If it were possible to single out the deserving from the rest; to know, as He did, the whole extent of the mischief; to draw it forth; and, by pouring a flood of copiousness on the epidemic plague, to crush it altogether; if some fragments were left after all were satisfied;—if it were possible to do this, without injury to others, then let the charities of all be gathered into one mass, in order to sweep away the destitution. But if this be not possible, it does not follow, that, because the wisdom of man has failed, the law of God should fail. Compassion is still His unrepented law in the human breast; and though his plans may have failed, he will not "lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy vi. 12.), unless he keeps his firm hold upon principles, one of which is compassion. The very existence of distress, without reference to its cause, is (as in the example of the Saviour) a claim on our exertion.

Private benevolence is much better than a public plan. If the latter be found effectual, the compassionate man does not hinder it; he only stimulates it more urgently. But if it be not effectual, it is not his fault: he can only regret it. This regret will be lessened, however, if he find that relief lies not in human wisdom, but in human obedience; and that, if not meddled with by legislation, Nature so works in the breasts of all, that none would be left to perish in the sight of others. It is quite a mistake to suppose the latter must first be converted. Compassion does not depend on Christianity, though stimulated by it. Apart from Christianity, persons in distress are better off without a Poor Rate than with it; but if the lights of the Gospel be added, they raise the barrier of a moral impossibility against starvation. The problem owes its difficulty to the ambition of men, in meddling with things too high for them. If they would leave Nature and Christianity to their own resources, they would do for the cause of philanthropy, what parliament does for the interests of trade, when it repeals all restrictions, and withdraws the hand that was meant to help, but only embarrasses. All our schemes but impede a better mechanism. More is done by each taking his separate path among the poor, than by all the plans and parade of legislation. As Christians are multiplied the mass of poverty will be broken up; and it is better to leave them to "devise liberal things" (Isaiah xxxii. 8.), and "whatsoever" our "hand findeth to do," to "do it with" our "might!" (Ecclesiastes ix. 10.)

"When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there,\* neither His disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found Him—they said unto Him—'Rabbi, when camest Thou hither?'† Jesus answered them, and said—'Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.'" (John vi. 24—27). Two miracles had been performed; but now the people began to count upon them. Here no miracle is recorded; and it is likely that none was performed. On the two former occasions, the disciples did not expect a miracle, and still less could others. But when, instead of being overtaken by hunger, the people went in search of it, mark

\* At the side of the Lake of Tiberias, opposite to that on which Capernaum was built.

† He had crossed the Lake in the night, partly walking on the water.



how the Saviour's eye discerned the dawn of their sordid expectation, and immediately repressed it. In His mind there was room for compassion and for calculation too; and that may comfort those who are charged with want of compassion, because they can calculate as well as feel. Much may be gathered from the way in which our Saviour at one time relieved the necessity of the people, and at another checked their expectation. He could have given food to the destitute, as easily as health to the diseased; and the question is, why He was so sparing in the one, and so unfailing in the other. "But Jesus withdrew Himself—and great multitudes followed Him; and He *healed them all*." (Matthew xii. 15.) He never imposed a check on the *diseased*, as He did on those who were following Him for *food*. It is not known that ever He sent away unrelieved a petitioner for health; or that He relieved hunger more than twice. Here we find Him withdrawing Himself. His beneficent course had the effect of a great public charity. The eye of observation was upon Him; and what would have been the result to the people, if they had felt assured, that all who followed Him, would be fed by Him? It would have disturbed the whole constitution of Jewish society, and marred the success of His enterprise. He came to lead men into the path to heaven; but self-denial is essential to that path. "Godliness" turned into "gain" ceases to be "godliness." (1 Timothy vi. 5.) His object was to effect, in His disciples, the triumph of the spirit over sense. Had He multiplied loaves without measure, He would only have deepened and confirmed the debasement of nature, and graven more deeply selfishness and sensuality on the character of our species.

The lesson to be learned from the Saviour's example, is, not that every private individual should withhold his hand, but that every public body should turn its attention to the notoriety in which it resembles Him. It is a duty to have compassion in the heart for distress; but not to enter into a plan, which increases the poverty it pretends to relieve.

THE FOURTH OF A COURSE OF LECTURES  
ON THE  
CONNEXION BETWEEN  
NATURAL PHILOSOPHY AND REVEALED RELIGION.

DELIVERED IN VERULAM EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, LAMBETH,  
ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 15, 1847,  
Before the Members of the Church of England Young Men's Society,  
(South West London Auxilliary.)

BY THE  
REV. HENRY CHRISTMAS, M.A., F.R.S., F.S.A.,  
Minister of the Chapel.

*"These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens."*—Genesis ii. 4.

THE subject to which we have to direct your attention this evening, is one replete with difficulties, and one, moreover, of so extensive a character, that we have no idea of presenting to you more than a comparatively insignificant part of what might be said and written on the matter. It is but a few leading facts that we can bring under your observation, it is but a few hints that we can give you how you may best pursue the subject, so as to make the discoveries of modern geologists tally with that which is given to us in the book of Holy Writ.

Now, in the first place, we would observe that so far as the chronology (for therein lies the principal difficulty,) of Moses is concerned, we must either take that chronology just as we find it, or we must lay aside our belief in the book altogether. In other words, if we feel ourselves at liberty to reject the chronology of Moses, we may on the very same grounds feel ourselves at liberty to reject the history also: if we lay aside the one, we must inevitably lay aside the other; and for this simple reason, that the chronology of Moses is so perfectly clear, that it is absolutely impossible to misunderstand it, and that the discrepancies which are from time to time observed, are so accurately accounted for, and the labours of chronologists of various periods have been applied with so much successful research to them, that there remains no other ground upon which we can object to it, than this, namely, that Moses was not inspired, and that consequently the authority of Moses is not to be received as giving to us the Divine Word.

Then we are to choose between these two things. Either we must take the book of Moses with its chronology, as we find it, rectifying that chronology from time to time, in accordance with the system on which it is written; or we must admit that Moses has no right to come to us with a Divine authority, and we must lay aside, therefore, all the support and all the sanction which Christianity derives from his works. Now we cannot for a moment doubt that the writings of the Jewish lawgiver are of Divine authority. We have already seen that they are so, not only on account of their being received as such by the Jews, who were well able to distinguish that which was Divine from that which was human, but also through that which to us must be of still greater weight, namely, that they have been confirmed by the authority of Christ our Lord. We have, then, on these grounds, no difficulty whatever in taking the books of Moses, and the chronology of Moses, and accepting them as bringing to us the records of Divine truth. But, at the same time, we are not at liberty to deny facts, presented by those whose word and judgment we cannot dispute, and who can have no other motive in the investigation of them, than that of arriving at the truth. It will be, therefore, a great support to us in our putting together the grounds of our Christian faith, if we are able to show that the discoveries of good and wise men, men having no other object than the promotion of science, and the investigation of truth, are not contrary to,

but do rather corroborate and support the records of Moses. Then we shall have the authority both of human science, and of God's inspiration to the same fact, and we shall find one additional argument in support of that great theory, that truth is ever the same, that it will ever present to us the same facts, and that lead us in the same direction.

Now when men first began to investigate the nature of the globe on which they lived, and to look at in the light of modern science, they were soon led to see, that according to the appearances which existed among its component parts at that time, and which we have no reason to believe have for ages suffered any considerable change, a much longer period must have elapsed for the settling down or accommodating of certain strata which they observed in the earth, than that proved to be given to it by the ordinary modes of interpreting the records of Moses. For if, as it was generally understood, the days in which the works of creation were finished, were seven days equal in length to the days which we now have, and at the expiration of that period of seven days, men began to live on the earth just in the same manner and according to the same laws as they do now, making a small allowance for the possible period of time during which man remained in a state of innocence, then it might be said that rather more than six thousand years and six days, (which latter portion of time, small as it is, must be taken into the account,) had elapsed since God had called all things out of nothing by "the Word of His power," since He had made the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them. It was soon perceived that such a period of time was altogether inconsistent with the state of the terraqueous globe: and if it can be shown, as unquestionably it can, by the researches of science, that there are strata in the very body of the globe itself, which must have taken far more than those six thousand years and six days, (we mention the six days, merely because we would add them to the six thousand years, more or less, for which according to various modes of computation the world has subsisted)—if, we say, there are strata in the body of the earth which are absolutely incompatible with so short a period of duration as this, what must be said to the discoveries of astronomy which we have pointed out to you already, relative to the worlds and systems, the light from which must have taken at least two hundred millions of years before it could have reached that globe in which we are now residing? So that great as is the space of time which, as geologists tell us, has been occupied by the deposition of the strata in the body of the earth, it sinks into positive insignificance, when compared with those enormous periods, with which astronomy makes us familiar, and which come to us on still better authority, because capable of more mathematical proof than that which we derive from geological facts.

Here, then, we find ourselves upon the horns of a dilemma. We find the fact giving in a manner that cannot be misunderstood, and which we cannot deny, a certain series of circumstances: we find, on the other hand, that according to the ordinary mode of interpreting the records of Moses, those records give us a history not only discordant with, but contradictory thereto. It is as though we found somewhat in Scripture denying the fact of man's mortality, telling us that two and two do not make four, or something equally contrary to what we know to be the existing order of nature. There remains, therefore, but one mode of reconciling the discrepancies and of obviating the difficulty, namely, to remember that a man whose mind was inspired, though he was not commissioned to reveal all that could be possibly told concerning the formation of the world, certainly was not commissioned to say anything contrary to the fact, nor could it be believed for a moment that he did so; and we must, therefore, lay our account that we have erred in our interpretation of the words of Moses and that if they were carefully and closely investigated they will be discovered to contain nothing contrary to any truth, either now known, or at any future time to be established by the researches of scientific students.

When, therefore, the works of Moses were again examined with a view to find out where this discrepancy existed, and in what respect they had been misunderstood, it was very speedily observed, that there appeared to be two distinct periods of time, one pointed out in the words "In the beginning," and another in the six days in which the works of creation are said to have been finished. For as it is said, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," it might be believed, that at some period vastly anterior to that from which we generally date the creation, God called the *materials*

out of which the world was formed into existence—that during, peradventure, many thousands of centuries, this globe, formed thus in a chaotic state, was gradually depositing its strata, and settling itself so as to take the form in which we now find it, and that when this primary work of creation was accomplished, when the globe had taken somewhat of the aspect under which we at present see it, God then peopled it with those beings which we find therein, and prepared it for the use of man.

But, although this appeared at first to afford an easy solution, of the difficulty and to enable philosophers to give many ages, and thousands of ages, or millions of ages if it should be requisite, for the formation of the globe itself, it was soon found that it did not entirely meet the exigencies of the case; for as men investigated the strata concerning which we speak, and which strata must have taken so many centuries to become what they were, they discovered also in those strata the remains of extinct animals; and they found those remains in such vast quantities and under such very peculiar circumstances as to lead them to believe that one class of animals had existed at one time, that another class at another period of the world had succeeded to them, and another at a still subsequent æra to them, presenting various forms of organic life more or less perfect as they were more or less advanced in the animals of creation. And thus it became necessary to extend this long duration of time not only to the age during which these depositions were actually being formed, but after that æra and when the earth was qualified to be the abode of manifold animals; and this must have gone on age after age during which those depositions were made where at this present time we find their remains. Thus, then, it was necessary not only that there should be a vast space of time before the work of the six days, but also that there should be long subsequent periods during which particular kinds of animals should, as it were, have the whole globe to themselves. It was therefore, stated that we must find some means of lengthening out the six days of creation—it was not sufficient to find a long space of time anterior, but that the days themselves must be by some process enabled to reach this new condition and to give place for this new discovery. And fortunately for those who were theorising upon the subject, there was a passage found which seemed exceedingly well adapted for their purpose: that “one day was with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day:” and as, moreover, there existed a very ancient tradition that it took six thousand years to create the world, so they declared that those days of creation were periods of a thousand years, and that each day therefore might be fairly reckoned long enough for the work done in it. And they added that there was another reason why this interpretation might be fixed upon it, in that we are not told of the creation of the sun and the moon until the fourth day; and consequently as the revolution of the earth around her axis, presenting alternately one side and the other to the sun, causeth the day and the night, there could previously to the existence of the sun be no such measure of day and night as we now have, and that therefore the day and the night not being thus produced, the days might be extended to any length that the circumstances of the case required—that there was no absolute necessity that they should be periods of twenty-four hours, ay, or of twenty-four thousand years, if so long a period was needful, in order to accomplish all that which was done therein.

But even then, there were still difficulties found in the way; for if the earth were caused to revolve on her axis only on the fourth day, or if on the fourth day only, the sun and the moon were called into existence, while the world in which we live, a small and apparently insignificant part of the system, was created on the first, there appears an argument which becomes the greater the more we contemplate it, against the truth of the records of Moses, which neither astronomy nor geology can help us to overcome. There was an *a priori* probability that the more important parts of the system would be created first, and it was absolutely impossible to believe that that which is of itself so small and dependent could be first created, and that that upon which the whole depends, should not be created until a considerable period afterwards, a period increasing in length, and consequently increasing the difficulties of the case in proportion as the earlier days are lengthened out to meet the exigencies of another theory. It was soon, therefore, found necessary to give up this notion also, and it was next contended that

though these periods called days, might be theoretically lengthened out for the purposes of any hypothetical transaction, some other period must be found to admit the sun, the centre of the system, to take its proper place in creation; a period was required, corresponding with that at which the world was formed, coeval with it in point of time, or if there were any difference, it demanded that the most important portion of the system, and that upon which the world, and not the world only, but other globes depended, should be first called into existence.

These, then, were the difficulties, and these were but a small part of the difficulties, by which those who attempted in earlier days to reconcile geological and astronomical discoveries with the records of Moses were met, when they addressed themselves to their task. But it must be distinctly understood that apparently insuperable as some of these difficulties are, we by no means give them up; and this for two reasons. First, we cannot believe that the records of Moses are positively inspired, without, at the same time believing, that they must necessarily be true. Next, we say, that the wisest of those who have yet made geology their study have confined themselves to the collecting of facts, and have abstained from largely theorising upon their discoveries. Indeed one of the lights of geology in the present day has declared (a declaration, I believe, formed on careful investigation) that geology being as yet in its infancy it is absolutely impossible for us to compare it with that which is perfectly matured. When we have geology in the same condition as revelation, when we have all the facts laid before us and are competent to deduce some accurate and perfect theory therefrom, then it will be right for us to take the theory and the facts together, the entire system of the one, and compare it with the entire system of the other, and then we shall be somewhat in a position to ascertain whether they coincide or not. But to compare that which is revealed by the wisdom of God with that which is not half discovered by the wisdom of man, is evidently putting the wisdom of man to a test to which it ought not to be subjected; it is putting it in a position in which, even were man far wiser and far more able to investigate the truth than he is, it would have no right to be placed; and consequently it is equally unfair to the philosopher and to the believer thus to place the imperfect and the perfect in comparison, and thus to attempt to extract a coincidence when the materials from which the coincidence is to be extracted are not fully laid before us.

But yet, while we claim this as a ground of reserve, and therefore protest against any attempt either to overthrow the one or to throw discredit on the other, because we cannot make them coincide, for we must be certain that whatever God declares by His works He will not contradict by His Word, and that whatever He hath declared in His Word He will not contradict by His works; while, therefore, we protest against any attempt to overthrow either the facts of science or the declarations of revelation, because we cannot at all times make them to be in apparent unison one with the other, we do, we apprehend, perceive, that in proportion as we make further researches, on the one hand, and in proportion, on the other, as we more carefully investigate the inspired records, the difficulties do perceptibly diminish, and we find them diminishing in such a ratio as to give us reason to believe that before very long we shall be able thoroughly to understand how that the words of Moses are giving us the absolute and literal truth, and that *if rightly understood* they are, and will be found to be, in coincidence with all that the wisest of men have ever by means of scientific research investigated for themselves.

But there is one theory so remarkable in its character, that it is impossible to leave it without notice, more especially as it has at least as strong grounds to support it as any of those which we have already given you, and at the same time it proceeds from one who set out with the determination that whatever else gave way, he would, on no account, give up the authority of Moses; While, then, he investigated carefully that which Moses had declared, he set out, by taking up the belief, that the works of Moses being inspired by the wisdom of God must necessarily lay before us the truth of God. He entertained the theory that very vast periods of time have elapsed during which the world was not inhabited by our present race of men—that many thousands of years must have been occupied, by the gradual dispositions of those strata which we find in the earth, and probably many thousands of years, during which those animals, whose

remains we find in those strata were in existence—that various classes of animals passed away series by series and just as we find them, and that consequently instead of taking the six thousand years more or less, and the six days, we must be content to take with the astronomer and with the geologist thousands and millions and perhaps hundreds of millions of years for the work of creation. While he admits that the facts of science require all this, he goes on to say that he sees no inconsistency at all between this theory and the circumstances related to us in the books of Moses; and he observes, in the first place, that while we take every advantage of the notion, that the words “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” may be taken by themselves, and that they give us a long period of time concerning which nothing is said, and during which the Almighty may have been carrying on His work; yet, that this not being sufficient for the purpose of *any* theory and not holding out with regard to the works of creation themselves subsequently mentioned, we must understand that there are two distinct periods of creation spoken of in the *first* and *second* chapters of Genesis. He states that the history of the first period commences with the first chapter, that God “in the beginning created the heavens and the earth,” and goes on through the whole work of creation as given to us in the six days, and at last concludes with the words, “And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.” In this we find the narrative of the creation of man. On the sixth day “God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.” Furthermore, we may believe that they did increase and multiply according to God’s command, “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” Then, subsequently, he finds another history of creation, beginning with these words, “These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.” He observes that this is not consistent with the ordinary mode of interpreting the previous part; for we are told that there was not a man to till the earth, whereas in the previous narrative, we have not only been told of the creation of man, but have also been told of the command given to him to “be fruitful and multiply.” In the preceding part, moreover, we have the history of the creation of the sun and the moon, under circumstances presenting very great difficulty of comprehension, whereas reading that entirely as a prior creation and with which now we have nothing at all to do, we may argue that if the words which we have just read commence the history of an entirely new creation, in which we ourselves *have* a part, then the difficulties which have hitherto been found insuperable are all removed; for then a space of time extending to any length which the circumstances of the case require is already given for the previous stages in which the world existed, and also for previous races of men. And it is to be observed that this theory is corroborated by all ancient traditions, and that besides this there are many dependent circumstances which are perfectly consistent with the condition in which at present we find mankind, and inconsistent with any other. The astronomical objections at once vanish—for the periods required are given under the history of former creations; and the formation of the sun and the moon, and the season at which it took place, have no more anything to do in the way of objection; but all here being prepared, as we find it, for the existence of man, and yet at the same time hints being given to us of a previous creation, the facts of science, on the one hand, and the declarations of revealed truth, on the other, may be shown tend to the same point. Moses tells us of an earlier creation, in the narrative of the six days; the investigations of science point to what was done in those periods, under whatever head we may class them, and whatever length of time we may assign to them. And we proceed, therefore, to take up the work of creation in its *present* state, when God created our forefather, and placed him in the garden of Paradise.

Now without contending at present for the entire truth of this theory, there

are many things in favour of it. Those who have given an attentive examination to the first and second chapters of Genesis will find, (and this is a matter of great importance to remember,) that if the "six days" of creation specified in the first chapter are the *whole* of the days of creation, so that in the course of these six days God created all that He had to create and make, and rested therefrom, so that at no period subsequently did He again undertake the work of creation, then there is a marvellous omission, only to be supplied by the subsequent account; for we find *afterwards* God declaring it "not good for man to be alone;" and that God took from Adam a rib, and made of it a woman, and brought her unto him; and thus made human nature in Adam complete, and finished the work of creation—enabling him whom He had created in His own image to "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it." This makes no part of the "six days" of creation, but took place subsequently thereto—a coincidence with the theory to which we have just alluded, very striking—which shows that narrative to be perfectly compatible with the hypothesis, and that in fact the inconsistency only exists in our own misconception.

Let it be observed, too, that there are not a few difficulties thrown in our way by chronology; for while we have the chronology of Moses perfectly clear and intelligible, and so intelligible, as we have already said, that we must either accept the chronology or deny the authority of the book, still we know that there are many oriental systems of chronology which appear to have been calculated with very great accuracy and to have been very closely and scientifically investigated, which while they tally in many important points with that of Moses, do not in all. For instance, there is the Hindoo chronology which results from astronomical observations, made by men far more competent to decide than any of the Hindoos of the present time, inasmuch so that these moderns cannot understand or verify them. We find those very observations tracing up astronomical phenomena to a far remoter period than that assigned by Moses to the creation of the world. But then this may be accounted for by their having made what may be called back reckonings; for where they speak of an eclipse of the sun, for instance, taking place at a particular period, and that period more distant than the creation of the world according to the Mosaic account, then if we carefully compute the position of the heavenly bodies at that period, providing they had been in existence, or that the present race of men had been in existence to observe them, we shall find that that eclipse would certainly have taken place. But as we are unable to admit this chronology, and must take the chronology of Moses as we do, and believe that the race of Adam was not in existence at that time, and as no relics of any others have come down to us, we must perceive that whatever has been done, by human ingenuity has been done by the descendants of our forefather Adam and that consequently those computations must have been made in the way that we ourselves have verified them, by calculating what would have been the position of the heavenly bodies at the time when an eclipse or other celestial phenomenon is said to have taken place.

And to a certain extent the same is the case with regard to the Chinese chronology. This extends many thousand years past that of Moses; and, indeed, they have reckoned the foundation of the Chinese empire to be far more ancient than Moses makes the foundation of the world itself. We allude to these things at present only to shew the great idea that men have had of the importance of antiquity, and that they have been pleased to go back to far greater periods than that which the inspired Word of God gives to us as the period of the creation of the world: and as there were traditions (and we must not lose sight of that *whole*, of which tradition is only a part,) existing, probably, among the antediluvians themselves, and certainly existing very shortly after the flood, concerning races of men in existence before Adam, so we may believe that there is ground for that theory which we have laid before you; and if it shall be found that many of the difficulties which science apparently presents in the way of the reception of Divine truth are thereby obviated, it is then satisfactory so far as this—that if we can find out *one* way in which we can reconcile the word in revelation and the work in creation, the wisdom of God may doubtless, point out many others. If we, however, can shew that there is one way of reconciling them, and that in the works of scientific investigation on the one side, and in the truth of inspiration on the other, the difficulties may be obviated, we maintain that the time is not spent in vain—there is pro-

bably, at all events, *some* truth in the theory thus enunciated, and it is unquestionably deserving of our most serious consideration.

But every geological difficulty does not amount to a mere question of time : and it may be said to us—'If there were races of men existing, not a few but many in succession, so as to give us some reason for believing in those hundreds of millions of years concerning which we spoke when calculating astronomical distances, what became of them? If they were created for the glory of God did they live to His glory, or were they like ourselves subject to sin and infirmity? We reply that concerning this subject, at all events, inasmuch as the very existence of such race is conjectural with us, and dependent upon our interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis, we certainly have no right to venture even a theory. But thus much we may observe, that no relics of them have come down to our time. If to certain stages of creation, we refer the vast quantity of fossil remains which have reached us and which have so interestingly occupied the attention of philosophers, if those fossil remains belong to the ages to which we refer them, and we find no remains of men handed down together therewith, and having every reason to believe that had men existed at that time and been subject to death, their fossil remains would have followed the same rule with others, and that we should have found the skeletons of human beings in the same condition that we find the remains of birds, and beasts, and fishes, and insects, and reptiles, we may perhaps be permitted either to infer that men did not then exist, or that if they did exist they were not subject to the same fate, and this for the very simple reason that we have no relics of them remaining. They may have been transported to other worlds, if such there were; they may have been in a state of probation for a time, and when that state of probation had been fulfilled, they may have been removed to a nearer station to the Almighty's throne. We may have many ways of interpreting and accounting for their non-appearance. We have no revelation at all concerning them, not even of their very existence, unless we understand the first chapter of the book of Genesis to refer thereto.

But there is one fact which is very important. We are accustomed to consider that as death came into the world by the sin of man, and as death "passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," there would have been no death throughout creation had not man sinned. And there has been a theory derived therefrom, that animals have souls, and that eternity of being has been given to them, inasmuch as had it not been for the sin of man, death would not have entered into the world, and therefore those inferior animals who now suffer the pain of death may be said to suffer that penalty through man's transgression, and as through man's transgression they are sharers in man's fate, it is but reasonable in accordance with what we know of the bounty of God to suppose that they also shall have some share given to them of man's happiness hereafter. This however appears to be altogether overthrown by those very discoveries to which we have referred; for we see that there have been existing, not here an animal, and there a bird, and there a reptile, but whole crowds and nations of these beings, subjected to death. Death swept them away by thousands and tens of thousands at once, and it is clear therefore that death existed in the world, according to those discoveries, long before the period of *Adam's* existence, and consequently could not have been introduced among the *inferior* orders as the result of *Adam's* transgression.

If, therefore, we are to take these as facts (and it is impossible for us to deny them) we are induced to believe that death, so far at least as the inferior animals, are concerned, is a condition of creation with which the sin of Adam had nothing to do. This may lead us to still further deductions concerning the place which those inferior animals do occupy in the Divine economy. It may lead us also, more especially taken in connexion with the singular fact that no human fossil remains have been discovered among the fossils of the lower animals, by parity of reasoning to arrive at some conclusion concerning that state in which if there have been men existing before, those men may have been placed. They may have been transplanted and translated, as some have since been, so that without tasting of death they may have been removed to the presence of the Lord. And, indeed, may it not have been with the idea, among many other good reasons, of familiarizing our minds to something like this, that we have those two instances which we do find of men who have passed away from this world without suffering the pains of death? For we have two expressly recorded. "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God



took him." And the very manner of the translation of Elijah is circumstantially given. The horses and chariot of fire which carried him away from the vision of men, took him likewise, without passing through death, to the presence of the Lord. If, then, these men passed away under such circumstances as these, in our fallen state, surely some may have previously passed more gloriously and more magnificently; and thus we have an idea given us of the scale of position which might have been reserved for Adam, had not Adam fallen. And are we not led to consider, that it was in consequence of that fall, already devised from the beginning of the world, that is to say, from the beginning of the universe, in the eternal and inscrutable counsels of the Great Supreme, that this our fallen nature should be dignified by the Advent? In whatever light we look upon it, this our fallen nature does arise in dignity and sublimity. It presents itself under the most awful development to us; and the love of God, radiating through the clouds and darkness of our fallen nature, shines out more brightly and reveals to us Him, whose name is love, who willeth that none should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of His truth, and hath made such full and plentiful provision that this His will should be carried into effect.

We are well aware, that many of those things of which we have been speaking to you to-night, many of those theories, which we have endeavoured in such brief words to lay before you, have been presented to you in language inadequate to give you anything like a true and proper conception of the grounds on which they rest, and, indeed, of many of the theories themselves. We are well aware too, that many of them are in themselves but conjectures. The facts are few and simple; and the very science which rests upon them must be said to be in its infancy. So far as they are confirmed to us by astronomical truth, they of course increase in importance; we may set greater value upon them, and rely more entirely upon the deductions which they present to us. Still we give them simply, as a collection of facts, and we only present them, in order to show that there are ways whereby in our present darkness, and in the present infancy of this most interesting science, the Word of God, as revealed to us in the Book of His revelation and the works of God as revealed to us in His creation, are by no means, even, I say, in this our present state of darkness, irreconcilable the one with the other; and also to show, that the more closely we examine the one, and the more diligently we survey the other, the more small will the difficulties become, and the greater the probabilities of an ultimate and perfect coincidence being proved between them. And when we speak of a coincidence between the one and the other, it is not that we take them at present to be at all dis severed, and as though they were telling us different histories, but it is because the one tells us that which we can understand and fully receive as a whole, the other, that which comes to us in small fragments and by parts at a time; and therefore when we speak of their being entirely reconciled the one to the other, we merely mean, that we shall be able to see what we do not clearly discern now, that they both give out the same history. These, then, are a few hints thrown out in order to show in what way we may perceive their reconciliation; how careful we ought to be not to allow our minds to be biassed by any system which has been already received. "To the Word and to the testimony." This is the court of ultimate appeal. No theories of any man can bind us. Not the opinion of any commentator, however wise, nor the opinions of any bodies of men, however august, are to weigh with us. The words of God alone are to be our guide in the matter. Many helps are given us, rightly to investigate the truth; but we are to lay aside any theory which may have been formed, however apparently consistent, directly we find that truth coming to us from another point, shows to us that that theory has not the consent of the rest of God's works, and consequently not of His Word. Hence it is that we are taught to "search the Scriptures." We claim for no other book that which we claim for this. Here we have the unadulterated Word of God, and it therefore *must* be true. The comments and decisions of men upon it are the works of beings as finite as ourselves, subject to the same error, and, it may be, subject to greater error. From this we perceive, that while we read the Word of God with deep reverence, it is necessary to examine it carefully for ourselves: "Search the Scriptures." Search them not only for scientific purposes—search them not only for historical events—but search them above all because "in them ye think ye have eternal life; and these," says our Lord, "are they which testify of Me."

## THE FATHER WELL PLEASED IN THE SON.

### A Sermon

BY THE

REV. HENRY MELVILL, B.D.

PREACHED IN ST. PETER'S CHURCH, IN THE TOWER,  
ON CHRISTMAS MORNING, DEC. 25, 1847.

*"For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."*—2 Peter i. 17.

WE need not tell you that it is of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Being who was as on this day born of a pure virgin, in Bethlehem, that St. Paul uses these words, and that the voice which he commemorates was that which had been heard upon Mount Tabor, when our Saviour was transfigured. The words quoted by the apostle had been used by God upon other occasions; as, for example, when Jesus was baptised in the river Jordan by John. We think that their consideration cannot fail to be well adapted to the present joyful festival; inasmuch as, by asserting the sonship of Jesus, and the pleasure and satisfaction which the Father felt in Him, they suggest topics of discourse which, if interesting at all times, are likely to be peculiarly so upon Christmas day.

We are assembled upon that anniversary which ought to be unto us the most joyous in the year, as bringing the commemoration of an event, in which, far more than in any other that ever occurred on the theatre of this earth, each one amongst us is individually and intimately concerned. "For us men and for our salvation," did the eternal Word, as at this time, consent to be "made flesh," and He who was "in the form of God," and who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," entered, in human covering, the scenes of human habitation. If the birth-day of a parent, or a child, or a friend, be hailed by us with delight, as crowded with the recollections of past enjoyments and the anticipations of future, what should be the emotions created by the birth-day of a Saviour, to whom alone we owe it, that the present is not all mystery and the future all hopelessness? If Christendom felt towards its rightful Lord as a loyal nation feels towards its king, then not indeed with the roar of cannon, or with the waving of banners, would this morn be ushered in, but assuredly with the melodies of joyful anthems and the tokens of deep thankfulness. There would be heard through our valleys, there would be echoed through our mountains, the rapturous acknowledgment, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given;" and "old men and maidens, young men and children," would repeat the angelic chorus, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Let only the mind be informed, or rather, let the heart be interested, in the truths that "all have sinned," and that "the soul that sinneth it shall die," and there cannot be aught else but a bounding of spirit at the announcement—"Unto us is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

But whilst it is undeniable that a sense of human necessities will make us rejoice in the tidings of human deliverance, it seems also undeniable, that before we can thoroughly enter into the delightfulness of Christmas, we must have clear and well defined views of the person and work of our Redeemer; and it may, by God's help, contribute to our forming these, if we consider separately the statements involved in those words which St. Peter heard

when Christ was transfigured. There is, first, the statement of the relationship in which Christ stood to the Father ; there is, secondly, the statement of the satisfaction which that Father found in Christ. Let it be our endeavour to examine and illustrate briefly both these statements. In other words, let our Christmas day sermon be employed on these two facts ; the first, that the Son of the virgin Mary is also God's "well beloved Son," the second, that in this "beloved Son" God is "well pleased."

I. Now it is very important that you have right thoughts of the sonship of Christ, or of the sense in which Christ is affirmed to be God's Son. It is clear from Scripture, that Christ is the Son of God, in such sense as to prove Him divine ; for St. Paul argues from His sonship, His superiority to angels, when he asks, in the epistle which has been just read to you from the altar, "Unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten thee ?" Probably, the circumstance of this human generation procured for our Saviour the title of God's Son. As man, He may be declared to have been the Son of God, in a sense which, to a certain extent, is peculiar to Himself. Indeed, when His birth was foretold to the virgin, the miraculous production of His humanity was expressly given as the reason whereby He should be called the Son of God. "The power of the Highest shall overshadow Thee : therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Here it is evident that the name "Son of God" is applied to Christ simply as man, and that the reason of such application is, that as man, He had no earthly, but most truly a heavenly, Father. Moreover, the name "Son of God" is frequently given to Jesus as Messiah, the Deliverer long promised to the Jews and to the world. Indeed, there is perhaps no sense in which the phrase is so often employed ; and, being considered as titles of office, the words "Son of God," or "Messiah," or "Christ," were used by the Jews as convertible terms. And there is another and a very remarkable sense in which Christ is styled in the Bible "the Son of God." He is so called as having been raised by Divine power from the grave. You will find, that when preaching in the synagogue, at Antioch, St. Paul said, "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again ; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee." And if you think attentively on the nature and consequences of the resurrection, you will perhaps lose your surprise that the words should be thus applied by the apostle. The leaving the grave, and the receiving that spiritual body which is glorious and indestructible, may fitly be described as the being born into a new life, the entering, as though by nativity, on another and a nobler existence.

But allowing all these senses, it is still evident, we think, that in calling, Himself "the Son of God," Christ originally designed to assert His proper Deity, and was so understood by those who heard Him. Once, for example, when He had referred to God as His Father, in order to justify His working miracles on the Sabbath, the Jews, you read, sought to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but had also said that God was His Father, "making Himself equal with God." So that to assume the name of "Son of God," was, under certain circumstances, considered tantamount to the claiming absolute divinity. And however incomprehensible—and incomprehensible it is, so that all finite intellect must shrink from the effort at grasping the mystery—if it be true, true on the authority of Scripture, that while the first and second Persons of the Trinity are co-eternal and co-equal, the Divine nature has been derived by the second from the first, then is Christ the Son of God in a sense which holds not good of any but Himself ; and well might the apostle, in the passage to which we have all along referred, argue, that the only begotten of the Father excels in dignity all created intelligences, and well might the Father himself, designing signally to attest the greatness of the Mediator, send a voice from the excellent glory with no other proclamation than these simple words—"This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

II. But it is the second division of the subject on which we wish especially to dwell. We have examined in what sense Christ is here styled "the Son of God," and we are now to consider the statement, that in this beloved Son God "is well pleased." We shall now regard the Son solely in His character of Mediator, that character, which, as on this day, He was born to assume. We would endeavour to show why the Father is "well pleased" in the Son, surveying that Son as humbling Himself to dwell with man, and not as exalted in His own essential nature. There are two points on which we will briefly touch. The Father may be considered as "well pleased" in His Son, first, because Christ's mediation magnified all the attributes of God, and secondly, because it met all the necessities of man.

Amid all the characteristics of sovereignty and might given by Jehovah under the old dispensation, there was no visible embodying of His several properties. Form there was none, nor figure, nor similitude; but thrilling voices and burning words, these were Israel's imagery and shining of God. But, by assuming human nature, Christ became the portraiture forth of the Father's glory to this lower world, so that, according to His own assertion, "He that hath seen Him hath seen the Father also." He is to be regarded as exhibiting to mankind all that can be known and understood of Godhead. He stood in the midst of an evil generation, not indeed exempt from many weaknesses to which "flesh is heir," but still manifestly the Being of another sphere, gifted with an intelligence whose scrutiny was wholly irresistible, and armed with a power before which all nature did reverence. Whatever can be conceived of the sublime and the tender; whatever mind in all its best and highest musings, can ascribe to God, of holy and mighty and merciful things; whatever of the immensity of omnipotence, whatever of the yearnings of infinite compassion, could be shown upon a contracted and darkened stage, of all this was Christ Jesus the glorious personification. And when foul spirits shrunk away, and the turbid elements hushed themselves in the deep quiet of an infant's slumber, and disease and death gave up at His command the wasting body and the mouldering corpse; and when, moreover, tears fell from eyes on which sin had entailed no bitter baptism, and moving words were meekly uttered in reply to fierce revilings, and invitations to repentance and promises of forgiveness fell amidst scoffing and hardened multitudes; oh! when, we say, there was all this exhibition of power, all this display of wisdom, all this manifestation of purity, was there not planted amongst men such an exhibition of the over-living and one true God, that all former scattered and separate discoveries might seem lost in this superior blaze, and the Father might so exult in this marvellous disclosure of Himself to His fellow-creatures, as to make the announcement—"This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased?"

And this will be yet more apparent if, to the consideration of the extraordinary manner in which, as "the express image of God," Christ magnified His Father's attributes, you add that of the degree in which He glorified God by His sufferings, His obedience, and His death. Had no Mediator interposed when Adam fell, we may not doubt that not one of his descendants would have escaped the bitter pains of everlasting death. We have no right to think or speak as though there were a choice of remedy. The true scriptural faith is, that without Christ there would have been no remedy—that had He not risen as the surety, the substitute, for the fallen, the curse which disobedience had provoked could never have been repealed, and never even mitigated. But, whilst so much was done where nothing was deserved, it is needful to remember that God was magnified whilst man was redeemed; that the ruins of our nature were, as it were, built into an altar on which the high priest, of our profession presented unto the Father oblations of the most costly merit. Had we, indeed, been left to perish in our iniquities, every mouth must have been stopped before God; so perfectly just would have been our fate, that no solitary tongue could have arraigned the proceeding. But contrast this demand of universal ruin with the joyous tidings of redemption; contrast God's justice as magnified in penalties exacted of man, and by the pangs sustained by Christ; contrast God's righteous law as honoured by the punishment of all who had broken it, and by the obedience of Him who had fulfilled it; con-

trast God's hatred of sin as displayed by His casting eternally away the creatures of perdition, and by His giving His only and well-beloved Son; contrast mercy, contrast purity, justice, power, wisdom, as manifested in man destroyed through the transgression of the first Adam, and man restored through the mediation of the second; and who will deny that all which Christ did and suffered upon earth brought, according to His angelic birth-song, "glory to God in the highest," as well as "on earth peace, good will to man?" Who can survey "mercy and truth meeting together," "righteousness and peace kissing each other;" who can behold seraphim and cherubim bending over the ark of the Gospel covenant, desiring to search and scrutinize the mysteries of this stupendous combination, "a just God and a Saviour," just and yet a justifier, and not perceive that the Son crucified is most emphatically the Father glorified; that Christ obedient and buffeted and slain for man, is God exalted, and honoured, and vindicated; that a salvation through blood sprinkled and righteousness imputed is as a centre into which each property of the Creator brings its own lustre, blending itself beautifully with every other? And if all this be confessed, is there not cause for asserting that the Father might declare Himself well pleased with His beloved Son, because that Son in His mediatorial capacity magnified all the attributes of Deity? He stood among men the "express image of His Father's person," and He actually died amongst men not more as the restorer of fallen creatures than as the vindicator of the insulted Creator; not more as the deliverer from sin, than as the manifestor of the magnificence of God. And whilst such vast results, involving the honour of Him who "sitteth on the circle of the heavens," were to follow from the mission in which Christ was engaged, and which was fast hurrying forward to a triumphant issue, shall we marvel, that the voice of celestial gratulation was heard pronouncing such words as these—"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?"

And yet this representation would be in a high degree erroneous, were we to confine our thoughts as to the origin of the pleasure ascribed to the Father to the fact of the Father's attributes having been magnified by the Son's mediation. We may not suppose that the Father is well pleased in Christ only because in Christ the Father is glorified; we have yet to consider the pleasure as springing from the exactness with which the Son's mediation met and satisfied the necessities of man. And shall it ever be wearisome to a Christian congregation, to hear of the abundant mercies provided for us by the life and the death of Him whose birth we this day commemorate? We know that if we now speak to you of human wants as exactly met by Christ's interference, your minds, long familiar with such topics, will anticipate all that we can advance; but sin pardoned because punished in Christ, and man justified because united to Christ, these may be accounted common place things when you can shew that the fires of hell are extinguished, or that the lustres of heaven have grown pale and unattractive. Whilst the burden of sin is felt the name of Christ must be precious; and if we are conscious of imprisonment we cannot hear too often of deliverance. And there is need of but few words to show the adaptation of the work of the Saviour to the wants of the sinner. Man by nature lies under condemnation; but Christ endured that condemnation, "being made a curse for us." Man even when freed from condemnation has no power to attain unto a righteousness acceptable in the sight of his Creator; but Christ obeyed in all points the law, and now where God imputes not sin He imputes the righteousness of His Son. Man, though pardoned through Christ's death and justified through His life, is yet unfit, through the dominion of sin, to enter into association with the undefiled company of heaven; but Christ, as a risen and glorified Saviour, intercedes on his behalf, procuring the gift of the Holy Spirit by whose influence the justified man becomes also sanctified, and thus, he who before had a title to the inheritance acquires a fitness for entering on its possession. Hence there remains no necessity for which a supply is still wanting. Christ is literally made unto the soul "wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." But if in the second person of the ever-blessed Trinity there reside all these supplies for the wants and weaknesses of the children of men, might

we not expect such an announcement from the eternal Father as is recorded in our text to have come from the excellent glory, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased?"

And now, brethren, having briefly investigated the causes of the Father's being "well pleased" in the Son, it becomes us to ask you whether, when Christ is displaying his character of a Saviour, you, too, are "well pleased" in Him. The "natural man" is not well pleased in Christ; the self-righteous man is not well pleased in Christ; no man is well pleased in Christ, who realises not that adoption of which Scripture makes mention, who is not himself admitted into the privileges of the sons of God, incorporated into the eternal and well-beloved Son, and made to know and feel that the members share with the Head the favour and acceptance of the Most High. I would have you look unto Christ and meditate upon the reasons why the Father pronounces Himself "well pleased" in Him. Judge your own restoration to God's forfeited image, by deciding whether any of the like reasons operate to make you "well pleased" in Christ. Are you really "well pleased" that such a Saviour is this day born in the city of David? Ah! do not answer rashly. He is born "to save His people from their sins." And does this really give you pleasure,—to be saved, not only from the punishment, but also from the power of sin? It is with great truth that an old writer says, that "Wilt thou be made whole? is a very difficult question to answer." It seems very easy, but when you come to think that the being made whole is the being brought to forsake much which we love, to "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts," and to "live soberly, righteously, and godly" in the midst of a world which perpetually plies us with temptations to live just the reverse, indeed you must allow it to be but too possible that the heart may secretly prefer the remaining sick to the being restored to health. Yet it is the great Physician, who is this day born. Let us not, then, profess to hail the event with joy, if it be not our honest and hearty desire to forsake all sin, and to be cleansed from all pollution. But no oblation will be accepted but that of yourselves; ye must present yourselves, body and soul, a "living sacrifice" to this well-beloved Son of the everlasting Father. Alas! how has one Christmas after another passed over the hearts of many amongst us and left behind it no deep sense of the "great mystery of godliness!" An Eastern proverb says, "The remembrance of youth is a sigh." Ought not the remembrance of solemn and holy seasons to be to some, if not to all of us, a sigh? By how many is Christmas celebrated and Christ despised, the birth-day kept and He who was born rejected! To how many others, does the day come round and find them even colder than it left them, more formal, more languid, more worldly-minded! But, oh! that this Christmas may be the commencement of better things! May none of us keep it with hearts, as has been too well said, like the inn at Bethlehem, in which there was no room for the holy child Jesus. The church invites us to draw near and to partake, as it were, around the cradle of the Infant, of the oblation which in the fulness of His strength, the Saviour presented unto God. The Sacrament is a feast, and its administration therefore accords well with the festival. May those amongst us who shall now join in this holy ordinance, derive such peace, such joy, such assurance, such humility from communion with the Lamb of God, that when we depart from the sanctuary, we may be able, with a fuller assurance than ever, to exclaim, "This is indeed the Son of God, and in Him our souls are "well pleased."

NOTES OF LECTURES  
ON  
PROPERTY AND PAUPERISM.  
DELIVERED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
BY THE  
REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.

LECTURE XIII.

BESIDE the *parochial* method of retracing the pauperizing process, there is the *parliamentary*.\* It might be enacted that, without meddling with the present Pauperism, all the new cases should be cast on gratuitous contributions. But this enactment might be either imperative or permissive. The latter would fail at first; because, in most parishes, the influential men are not convinced of its efficacy. But still it would be an excellent arrangement; for if a few parishes were to adopt it successfully, others would be induced to imitate it; and thus, avoiding any sudden jolt, the plan would be gradually spread over the whole country.

There are two ways of gradualizing a process. One is by successive imperative statutes; but it is better to introduce the right law at once into the statute-book; and to allow the country to adopt it when, in any part, a certain amount of acquiescence shall be obtained. One admirable example of this, is the law respecting the inclosure of commons, introduced about the commencement of the present century. If it had been made imperative, it would have caused an insurrection; but, being left to be done as the people please, the process goes on gradually; and a great addition is made to the agricultural resources of the country. Another is the law for the composition of tithes in Ireland. The contrary plan was proposed to be adopted there, with respect to Pauperism; and it brought out the whole country in petitions against it.

I am far less sanguine than I was, as to any improvement in England, from the gradual advance of right principles, among those who have the controul of Parliament. I believe that English *pauperism* is curable; but that English *prejudice* is *not* curable. I think it is one of those subjects, which keep the country ripe for revolution; and that, in the strides of such a revolution, the right process may be blundered on.

Attempts were made, some years ago, to regulate Scottish Pauperism, by Kennedy's Bill. The steps recommended were very good; but were to have been rendered imperative. I believe they had sufficient efficacy to clear any parish of its Pauperism. The fund raised by assessment, should be separate from that arising from contributions;—the first being extended to all on the roll; and the last being appropriated to new applicants. It is necessary that all rates should at length be done away. It is allowed that public charity is a great evil; that mischief is done by ostensible relief; and that it is better left alone. But if these things be true, they can weather the fiery trial of experience; and, unless they be so tested, and sustain the touch-stone, they deserve to be dismissed, as fantastic reveries of dreaming enthusiasts.

I must quote my own experience, to justify my confidence in Kennedy's Bill. I think I have seen its efficacy in an extreme case; and that it would succeed in St. Giles's. I think the charity of law would be replaced by a better charity, and a happier population. But there is no such confidence or conviction in the

\* See Lecture 11, Page 507.

country at large. Even in the city\* itself, there is a firm, though a decreasing incredulity. We found it easier to carry it in the parish, than to gain credit for it in the presbytery. There was an impression of its efficacy among its subjects; but the impression did not extend much beyond them; and we feel no surprise that, in a more distant quarter, there should be a still louder cry against it. Now, we are not displeased at this. We have unshaken faith in the process: but it is not yet sifted enough to establish its efficacy; and has still to endure the penalties of a minority. Its only claim is to simple sufferance. It is out of the question to force it on a reluctant or unconvinced parish; and we were much annoyed at its adoption having been made imperative. It was thus exposed to opposition, which it would not have met with on simple sufferance. We hope it will never be introduced except permissively. In such a case, no alarm is felt; because it need not be adopted, unless a certain amount of the inhabitants please; and thus improvement advances silently and surely. The only way, I hope, in which the law will interfere with the plan, is to let it knock at the door of every parish; but there to wait till the people choose to let it in. We care not how few adopted it at first. Half-a-dozen heavily assessed parishes would make a goodly outset. The old Scottish system (for it is not new) would advance, with increasing confidence, at every step; and there would gather on its path the light, not of the meteoric glare of theory, but of sure, sound, and sober experience. Its hardihood enables it to stand the brunt of all the difficulties in a parish. It only seeks leave to enter, and a quite asylum, where it may work its quiet way. We are averse to display and to dogmatism; and it does not comport with the sober style of demonstration to work on the credulity of men by the tricks of the unblushing mountebank. I was enabled to set up the system in the heart of a crowded city; but was led to fear its overthrow. We are glad to say, however, that it is going on in the old way.† One-tenth of the most plebeian population of Glasgow, is wholly cleared of its Pauperism. No clergyman in England can succeed with it, if the law be not altered; for I could never have succeeded, if some pettifogger had determined to annoy me, by throwing legal difficulties in the way, and bringing up every case (on appeal) to the Quarter Sessions. Many clergymen are carrying it on;—hoping to escape these annoyances. They do occasionally meet with such; but, in point of fact, the system is still advancing.

You will observe that Glasgow contained ten parishes, although they were all considered as one;—all the *voluntary* funds being collected into one, and distributed by the Kirk Session; while the Town Hospital had the distribution of the *compulsory* fund. The amount expended was often £14,000 a-year. My parish contained more than a tenth part of the population, and that the most plebeian;—absorbing £8,000 a-year. To obtain the separate management of this parish, we had to gain the consent of the Hospital, Kirk-Session, Magistrates, Presbytery, and General Assembly. Hence a number of acquiescences were to be obtained; and, if we had not been backed by the Magistrates at the outset, we could not have gained consent. I felt, that if I could succeed in such a parish, it would lead to imitation; and, to a slight extent, it has done so in Glasgow, and in some places in the country.

People thought the plan would fail from want of voluntary funds: but they never expected to be obliged to look round for a safe absorbent of the surplus. The latter, however, was the case. We had a rich congregation in the morning, and a poor one in the evening. The former contributed at the church-doors, £400 a-year; but not one farthing of that was appropriated to the relief of the new poor; for if we had held out that sum, Pauperism would have been fostered up to that mark. After supporting out of it the *old* poor, we gave the remainder to parish-schools. But all the *new* poor were supported by the *evening* collection; amounting to about £80 a-year. We did not wish to dissociate incurable diseases, insanity, deafness, &c., from the legal assessment; but only twenty new paupers, of all classes, were admitted in three years and nine

\* Glasgow.

† See Note (4.) to Lecture 11, page 507.



months; and I am happy to say, that the parish remains free from compulsory Pauperism.

People said we had rich elders, who helped the paupers; but the fact was, that those districts flourished most, which were appropriated to *poor* elders. There was one incorrigible elder, who said he gave away £40 a-year; and positively that was the very district whence most of our pauper-cases came! The average time demanded from each elder, was a quarter of an hour in a week; and one elder had not a single applicant in nine months. One district was very poor; containing only one family above the rank of workmen; but it contributed £2 to the Emigrants, and £5 or £6 to the Bible and Missionary Societies. If people now charge us with "theory," let them state what amount of "experience" would satisfy them. Even in the last "Quarterly Review," however, all the credit I can get, is that of being an "aimiable enthusiast!"

## HEZEKIAH AND SENNACHERIB.

### A Sermon,

BY THE

REV. ROBERT BICKERSTETH, B.A.

PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, CLAPHAM RISE,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 26, 1847.

*"And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord."*  
—Isaiah xxxvii. 14.

We have selected these words out of one of the appointed lessons for the day, intending, through God's help, to take a survey of the entire history with which they are connected. That history relates to the period when Hezekiah was monarch of Judah. He was a pre-eminently good prince, although not free from faults to which even the best men are prone; he was evidently a true servant of God, and one who desired to reign in the fear of the Almighty; and yet there were inconsistencies of conduct about him, which scarcely at first view appear compatible with the piety for which in the main he was characterised. Great allowance should be made for the failings of a man called to fill a post of such difficulty as he was—that difficulty rendered so much the greater on account of the corruption which prevailed in the kingdom. He was, moreover, the son and successor of a bad king. Ahaz, his father, had set him an evil example, and consequently left an harder task to Hezekiah to act as a faithful servant of the Most High. From the Book of Kings you may learn that Ahaz was notorious for his attempt to revive in Judah the worship of idolatry—"He did *not* that which was right in the sight of the Lord his God; he made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen; and he sacrificed, it is written, and burnt incense in the high places and on the hills and under every green tree." Evil to the nation where wickedness is throned in high places! The reign of this monarch, too, had been protracted for sixteen years; there was ample time therefore for the people to become confirmed in the practice of the idolatries to which the monarch tempted them. It was because of this a more arduous task which devolved upon Hezekiah when he succeeded to the throne and desired to govern in the fear of God. We ought, perhaps, rather to wonder at finding him righteous at all, than to be puzzled at meeting with inconsistencies in his conduct. Immediately upon his accession to the kingdom, he commenced an active reformation. He exerted the authority of his office to repress idolatry. He removed the high places, he brake the images and cut down the groves. So determined was he to uproot every vestige of idolatry, that he actually brake in pieces the brazen serpent which Moses had made: that emblem having become, as it would seem, an object of idolatrous superstition. You can hardly find a nobler testimony in favour of any of the monarchs of Judah, than that which is given of this prince: "He trusted," it is said, "in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that was before him; for he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments." The blessing which followed this conduct is explicitly recorded: "The Lord," it is said, "was with him, and he prospered whithersoever he went;" and it is added, as a proof of his confidence in God, that "he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not." We cannot but

mourn that a history so promising should present, in its subsequent parts, any details of a less encouraging aspect; but the melancholy truth is, that weaknesses afterwards appeared in Hezekiah's character, which proved either that he wanted firmness of principle to persevere, or what is perhaps still more probable, that prosperity and temporal honours had made him self-confident and prone to forget God. The first occasion of severe trial to Hezekiah occurred in the fourth year of his reign. At this period the king of Assyria, whose dominion Hezekiah had resolutely thrown off, came up against and besieged the sister kingdom of Israel. We know that this was a judgment which God sent upon Israel, for the sin of Jeroboam in the erection of the golden calves for the people to worship. The siege ended in the captivity of Israel; the monarch of Assyria took Samaria, made all Israel tributary to his crown, and disposed the people in different towns and villages of his own kingdom. Thus did Hezekiah behold a large portion of God's ancient people, by far the largest in point of number, enslaved by a heathen prince, and apparently surrendered of God to the dominion of an idolatrous nation. This spectacle appears to have had a wrong influence on the mind of Hezekiah. In place of making him more determined than ever upon cleaving to the Lord, it rather inclined him to make compromises with the Assyrians, and to enter into unhallowed agreement with them for the safety of his own people. After a time the king of Assyria besieged Judah. It was in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah that Sennacherib came up against all the fenced cities of Judah and took them. The occasion was indeed a trying one. It demanded a large exercise of faith and of confidence in God; and, alas! the demand proved too much for Hezekiah. In place of resorting for counsel to the Most High, he at once humbled himself to Sennacherib—as though repenting of his former valiant demeanour, he confessed himself in the wrong, and voluntarily offered to purchase peace by the payment of whatsoever tribute the foe should choose to levy. It was no inconsiderable sum that Sennacherib demanded of the king. He appointed, it is said, “unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold.” This sum, enormous as it was, Hezekiah contrived means to raise; and it is recorded to his extreme dishonour, that in order to complete the amount, he rifled the treasury of God; he cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the Lord, and from the pillars which were overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.” Such was the first false step of Hezekiah. In place, you observe, of relying, as he ought to have done, confidently upon God; in place of resolving to be faithful in his allegiance to Jehovah, and then leaving it to God to maintain His own honour, he descends from this high vantage ground of dependence on the Lord, to consult vainly for his own security by measures of carnal expediency and sinful concession. He had not faith enough to believe that the cause of truth must always have might enough upon its side; he thought it prudent to enter into a compromise with idolaters, rather than incur the risk of defeat by contending against them. Concession to error proved in his case, as it ever has proved and ever will prove to those who adopt it, the prelude to worse troubles; it first led him into crime of which he would otherwise never have dreamt, the crime of enriching the coffers of idolaters by the silver and gold which he tore from the temple of the Most High; and then, were the Assyrians content with the tribute which Hezekiah paid? Far enough from this. It would seem, that almost immediately after the payment of this tax, the king of Assyria made greater preparations than ever to besiege and to take Jerusalem. This brings us down to the history more immediately connected with the chapter before us. Sennacherib prepared a vast army, and deputed his chief officer to encamp before the gates of the city Jerusalem. Rabshakeh, for this was the name of the commander, having stationed himself over against one of the principal entrances to the city, demanded a parley with the counsellors of Hezekiah. Through them he sent a taunting message to the king, in the name of Sennacherib. It was a message of defiance and of mockery at all the resources of Judah for defence. It alluded to Egypt, as but a broken reed upon which to lean for succour; it even went on to speak of the Most High, as no longer on the side of Judah; it referred to the long series of victories which had signalled the armies of

Assyria, and moreover contained an entreaty to the people to make a compact with Sennacherib, and so to enjoy peace under subjection to his sway. The message was faithfully delivered to Hezekiah; and now we cannot sufficiently admire the course which he pursued. He at once assumed the garb of deep humiliation and repentance; he clothed himself with sackcloth and went to the house of the Lord. He thus wisely connected the present troubles of the nation with their former sins, and evinced his persuasion that all this disaster had sprung from neglect of God and disobedience to His Word. At the same time he commissioned the elders of the priests to go in sackcloth to Isaiah, who was known to be a true prophet, and to seek at once his advice and intercession with God, at this critical emergency. The message received from Isaiah was full of encouragement. It assured Hezekiah that no further disaster should befall; God would interpose to defend Judah, and defeat the intentions of her foes. It would seem, that after the interview with Hezekiah's counsellors, Rabshakeh returned to his master, the king of Assyria, who was elsewhere engaged in warfare. Sennacherib, however, at once wrote a letter to Hezekiah, breathing similar defiance, and threatening him with destruction. This was the letter of which it is recorded in our text, that "Hezekiah received it from the hand of the messengers; and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord." The king then kneeling in God's house, with the open letter before him, besought earnestly for protection from the Most High. His prayer was heard, and immediately answered. The prophet Isaiah was directed to go to the king with a message of deliverance—to assure him once more that God would defend Judah. Of the king of Assyria said the Almighty—"He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it." The prophecy, as we all know, was accomplished to the letter, and Judah was saved with a deliverance far surpassing their boldest expectations. He in whose hand are the issues of life and death commissioned His angel by night to traverse the host of Sennacherib. From rank to rank did the avenging messenger pass, silently withering the strength of that enormous army; in one night the sleep of death settled upon an hundred and fourscore and five thousand of the warriors; and when they arose in the morning, they were all dead corpses. Such was the issue of this threatened invasion; God thus revealing Himself as mightier than the mightiest of human opponents, and equal to scatter with the breath of His mouth the proudest array of hostility to His people.

We have thus entered at some length upon the details of this memorable history; it remains, that in what follows, we should aim by the Divine blessing to detect and to enforce the lessons with which the narrative abounds.

And, in the first instance, we will remind you once again of the danger of making any concession to evil. We think this point is strikingly illustrated by the history before us. You observe Hezekiah raised to the monarchy of Judah, evidently for the purpose of accomplishing in God's hands a great reformation in that idolatrous kingdom. Judah had been led into idolatry partly through the ill example of kings, who should have restrained the people from forsaking the Most High. Hezekiah set out at the commencement of his reign, with the determination to uphold the true worship of God, and to repress every kind of idolatry; he took active measures to destroy every temple and grove to which, in the period of her degeneracy, Judah had resorted for idolatrous worship; and then, in connection with this zeal for a pure worship, the king evinced a righteous determination to emancipate his people from subjection to any authority but the Divine. The race of Judah stood in a peculiar relation to Divinity; according to the very terms of their covenant with God, they were to acknowledge no other dominion but His. It was either, then, their fault or their punishment, to be tributary to any temporal kingdom. It was monstrous for the people of God, a people whom Jehovah shielded and defended with His own right arm, to whom God had prescribed laws, and in whose behalf He had ever shown Himself strong,—it was monstrous for them to yield homage to any idolater, however vast his power or wide his control. God might, and indeed afterwards did, permit Judah to fall into captivity to heathen princes; but this was in punishment

for their guiltiness, in having forsaken Himself; it was not until after they had proved themselves utterly unworthy of the high privilege of having the Lord for their lawgiver, and the Lord for the king. It was, therefore, every way praiseworthy in Hezekiah to revolt from the dominion of the king of Assyria. He only acted in this particular as every righteous monarch of Judah was bound to act. To have done otherwise would have proved him little worthy of the honour to which he was advanced, in being made king in Jerusalem. It is unquestionably to his high praise that you find it recorded—"he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not." It had been the act of Ahaz, the idolatrous king, to make Judah acknowledge the authority of Assyria; and it was not the least evil transmitted to Hezekiah's times, which he boldly resisted—namely, the subjection of Judah to the Assyrian monarch. But then we observe, that in whatever degree it may be shewn to have been praiseworthy in Hezekiah to renounce subjection to the Assyrian monarch, it was inconsistent, and not only inconsistent, but positively wrong in him, afterwards to capitulate with this Prince. If it was right, in the first instance, to assume a position of independent opposition to Assyria, it was egregiously foolish and sinful in him afterwards to aim at conciliating this monarch by unworthy concessions. It is impossible to justify the conduct of Hezekiah at both of these periods. If we applaud him, as I think we are bound to applaud him, for "rebellious against the king of Assyria, and for serving him not," we must condemn his conduct in afterwards submitting himself to this Prince, and in aiming to procure terms of peace by the proffer of tribute. This is the point of view in which Hezekiah's conduct appears to me to have been specially faulty. True, the temptation was a strong one. He beheld the Assyrian Prince invade the borders of Israel, and almost without difficulty possess himself of the cities of Samaria. He beheld the ten tribes of Israel carried away captive by the conquering enemy, and in point of number the two tribes of Judah were far inferior to the tribes of Israel. Hezekiah might have argued, that if the conquest of Israel were so easy, how much more easy to the Assyrians would be the conquest of Judah! But he ought to have read and observed, in that defeat of Israel, the fulfilment of a judicial sentence pronounced on account of their inveterate idolatry. The forces of Assyria were the scourge in God's hands to chastise the iniquities of His chosen race; and the very spectacle of this ought to have made Hezekiah more scrupulous, lest in the smallest particular he should make himself guilty of open departure from God. So far from being driven by the sad warning of Israel's defeat to parley with idolaters, he ought rather to have been strengthened in the resolution to keep fast to his allegiance to the Most High; whereas, in place of this, terrified by the numbers and the success of the Assyrian armies, and neglectful that God was the source of his strength, and that it is nothing with the Lord to save, whether by many or by few, he fell into the error of capitulating with the very foe, whom he had formerly courageously defied.

AY, and wherefore should we be thus careful to expose the guiltiness and the folly of Hezekiah in this particular, if not for the purpose of delivering an emphatic caution against ever making an unhallowed compromise, or an unholy concession? Depend upon it, that in religious profession there are but two sides—that of God and that of the world; we must take our part with the one or the other. You cannot make a concession to sin, without forsaking the source of moral strength. He who has God upon his side, need fear no adverse host; though the world, though Satan, though evil angels were embattled against him, there is One mightier with him than all who can be against him. But if once there be a compromise entered into with sin or temptation, the legitimate source of moral might is abandoned, and the avenue opened for all kinds of moral disaster. We are extremely desirous that you should mark and retain this all-important lesson; it is a lesson to all who have ever commenced in real earnest to be thoughtful for the soul, and to make profession of faith in the Saviour. You cannot have done this without finding it necessary to proclaim warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil. These are the Assyrians, these are the foes, who strive to subjugate

the human heart, to enslave its affections, to corrupt its desires ; and the first moment at which an individual betakes himself heartily to serve the Lord Christ, to forsake the idols upon which he may have hitherto lavished his best affections, to relinquish practices whereby God is dishonoured, he will find that there is a yoke which he has to cast off, as well as a yoke which he has to put on. It will be characteristic then of him to say, as of Hezekiah of old, "He rebelled against the Assyrians, and served them not." We applaud that decision ; we admire the boldness of the avowal, when a man openly declares himself to be the Lord's servant, acknowledging no dominion but His, and refusing submission to any other authority. And what we gather from the history before us is an emphatic caution. Beware, lest you recede from that determination. It will, most probably, have to be tested by some severe ordeal. The Assyrians will array themselves around you—evil lusts, evil passions, strong temptations, ensnaring seductions. You may be strongly inclined to make some compromise : 'I will endeavour to treat with the enemy ; I will make an agreement with the world ; I will allow myself this one gratification, to escape further importunity, or to avoid a more degrading subjection.' Ah ! in the moment you act thus, you abandon the position of real safety—you fall into the guilt of underrating the power of Divinity to uphold you in every difficulty and to strengthen you in every exigency. The concession will, probably, lead to worse crimes than you had ever imagined ; till the Assyrians, not satisfied by any partial tribute you may offer and yield, shall come upon you with more overwhelming numbers and with haughtier demands, resolved upon nothing less than your complete slavery, both in body and soul.

We go on to observe, that if in the foregoing particulars we may hold up the conduct of Hezekiah as a warning, there are other points of view under which he cannot too faithfully be imitated. We have already stated that the occasion of Hezekiah's fall is scarcely evident ; we know not whether to resolve this concession to the Assyrian into a foolish timidity, or into the workings of a self-confident spirit, which had made him in some degree lay aside his wonted dependence upon God. Whatever may have led to his fall, certain it is that the troubles which came upon him had the effect of leading him to repentance. It is remarkable to observe, how promptly Hezekiah betook himself to penitence and supplication—so soon as ever the danger actually menaced him. There was no doubt or delay on his part, in attributing the troubles of his kingdom to the sinful course he had followed, in leaguings with the Assyrian. At once, when the message of Sennacherib is repeated to the monarch, he seems to have connected the visitation with his previous fault ; he regarded the invasion of Judah by a hostile band, as a judicial proceeding, ordered by God's providence, in consequence of provocation offered to the Lord. It was an amazing advantage which Hezekiah thus derived from his previous piety, that he was able to trace out the cause of his affliction. The danger which encompassed him led to self-enquiry and examination ; and he was not long in calling to mind the dishonour which he had offered the Most High, in attempting to form any treaty of peace with his avowed adversaries. And the consciousness of guilt in this particular, did not deter Hezekiah from seeking help where alone it could be found. He at once appears as a penitent before God ; his outward attire in sackcloth gave indication of his inward contrition ; he enjoins similar acts of humiliation upon his counsellors and attendants ; he sought to enlist the supplications of Isaiah, a known prophet of the Lord, in his behalf ; and thus in every method did Hezekiah openly confess sin, and aim to avert wrath by acknowledging the offence whereby it was challenged. It is a fine spectacle which is thus presented to us of Hezekiah brought into trouble because of his departure from God's service ; instantly detecting in the chastisement the memento of his fault, and then fleeing to the mercy seat to make open confession, and to entreat Divine succour. He hastens himself to the temple of the Lord, as if he would openly evince the conviction, that as the visitation came in the course of Divine providence, so did it rest altogether with God to cause its removal ; and in this point of view we would exhibit Hezekiah to you, as an example to be pondered for imitation. In nothing are Christians often so much at fault as when

brought into difficulty because of transgression. We puzzle and perplex ourselves to decypher what is the meaning or design of the visitation ; often we are slow to connect it with any previous fault or backsliding which it is intended to correct ; or if we do interpret the dealing as a punishment on account of sin, we are apt to look upon it as appointed in anger ; and thus we let it drive us from, in place of leading us nearer to God. Ah ! we should do well to ponder more, and to imitate more the conduct of Hezekiah. His sinful concessions to idolaters involved him in affliction ; God permitted the adversaries, with whom he had sought to contract friendship, to come against him in the attitude of defiance. He beheld his country invaded, and the metropolis itself in danger of being taken. And what course did he pursue under this severe trial ? He first interprets the danger as a punishment sent for transgression ; he then resorts to repentance, well knowing that even heavy wrath may be turned away by a timely humiliation. He did not argue that because God smote him, therefore he was no longer privileged to appeal upward to God for deliverance ; on the contrary, he flees to the footstool of the Divine compassion, makes entreaty and confession, and so obtains deliverance. And we would call upon any amongst you, who may be summoned to the encounter with severe trials, to imitate Hezekiah in the conduct which he pursued ; connect the affliction with some sinfulness on your part, which God hath deemed it needful thus to chastise. But whatever you do, let not the affliction have the effect of repelling you from God. It is administered in love, not in anger ; it should be received as a mark of paternal faithfulness, and should therefore be regarded as a motive rather for turning to Him who smites ; and it is your high privilege as Christians to carry every trial, (as it were,) and spread it before the mercy-seat, to make known unto God every grief that disquiets, every fear that disheartens, every anxiety that oppresses ; and then it is that you act up to your high calling and vocation, when you take God at His own word, and when with hearty repentance and confession of sin you make known to Him your every want, and unfold to Him your every care, even as Hezekiah, who "when he had received the letter from the hand of the messengers, went up into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord."

There is another train of observation flowing obviously out of the narrative before us. We allude now to the way in which God made use of the Assyrians for accomplishing His purpose with respect to Israel and Judah, and to the signal manner in which He chose to destroy their forces. Nothing can be more obvious than that God employed the monarch of Assyria to chastise the rebellion of Israel. Israel had grievously provoked the Lord ; her kings and people had surrendered themselves to idolatry, and forsaken their allegiance to the Most High ; long did God forbear to smite ; and yet at length His vengeance was aroused, and the armies of Assyria were let loose to lay waste the province of Samaria, and take captive her guilty population. There was nothing perhaps further from the intention of Shalmanezzer, the Assyrian prince, than to act as the instrument to effect a Divine purpose ; and yet clearly all the preparations for the warfare, and all the successes of the enterprise, were subject to the Divine providence, and were actually ordained of the Almighty to bring to pass His own counsels. And so afterwards, when Sennacherib invaded Judah, little did the haughty idolater dream that he was acting as a servant of the King of kings, and accomplishing a purpose for which God had permitted him to wield so vast a command. It was the love of conquest, or, more probably, the thirst of gain, which stimulated Sennacherib to make warfare against Judah ; and yet all the while it was God who was employing him as His agent, to effect His counsel with respect to Judah and her prince. Nothing can be more striking than the representation which is given of this truth, in the chapter before us. God is described as addressing the heathen conqueror in these terms : "Hast thou not heard long ago how I have done it, and of ancient times that I have formed it ? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldst be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps." Thus the Assyrian is spoken of just as an instrument in God's hands for executing His designs. And if further proof were needful of this, what more convincing, and at the same time terrific, could be given than was furnished

by the destruction of the Assyrian hosts? The monarch of Assyria, in place of discerning the nature of his commission, only vaunted himself of his own power, and boasted of his own conquest. It is hard not to believe that opportunity was afforded him for gaining some knowledge of the power and might of the one true Jehovah; we can scarcely imagine Him to have been brought into such close contact with Israel, without deriving much information as to the true God; report must have told him how much God had done in times past for that race; and he could hardly have lacked evidence enough to teach him that he was now acting only by Divine permission, to scourge the disobedient people: and yet nothing could surpass the arrogance of his pride and boasting. Flushed with the success of his enterprise against Israel, He defied alike Judah and Judah's God; and then did Jehovah undertake the cause of His beleaguered people. "Whom," said God to the insulting Sennacherib—"whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed, and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high? Even against the holy One of Israel." And now that Jehovah identified Himself with the cause of Judah, the might of the Assyrians dwindled into feebleness; the breath of the Lord withered their hosts.

Can we fail of deriving important instruction from this observed dealing of the Almighty? I gather from it, that all the foes that can ever muster against the church of the Redeemer are but as instruments in God's hands. They can attempt nothing and accomplish nothing, except by His permission. Israel and Judah, as a nation, were typical, as we all know, of the church of Christ; the varied dispensations and dealings of God towards the former, were designed to adumbrate His dealings towards the latter. The foes of Israel were emblematic, then, of the foes to Christ and His church; and when we read of the Assyrians as mustering, in their proud and hostile array, against Israel and Judah, we seem to have a figure of that haughty opposition which the church of Christ, in its collective or individual capacity, hath ever had to encounter from the world. It is at least, then, encouraging, to know that her very foes are in the hand of God, and subject to His control. They cannot effect aught against the people of Christ, without Divine permission; they cannot overstep the limits which God's overruling providence hath assigned them. They may menace, they may afflict, they may persecute, they may impose fetters; but, after all, the cause is God's, and they can prevail no further than He sees good to ordain. We know of the ocean billows, in their wildest and most tempestuous fury, they are subject to a law, in virtue whereof they have appointed limits over which they may not pass; ay, and far above the tumult of ungodly men, in majestic sovereignty over all the tempests that may beat and rage against the ark of His church, there sitteth One supreme over all from the beginning. The Assyrians may muster against the disciples of Jesus, the adversaries of the Lord collect their forces and display their strength; yet can they accomplish nothing without Divine permission: and while for the moral purification of His people, or for the chastisement, it may be, of their iniquities, God may permit the adversary to gain some advantage, yet oh! it may be—it ought to be—for the encouragement of God's people, to know that their cause is still the cause of the Omnipotent. His people have but to clothe themselves in the sackcloth of genuine repentance, to pierce the heavens with believing and earnest supplication, and all that proud array shall wither or disperse; God shall come forth to confound the adversary, and to humble his pride with the tokens of His power. Yes, when one looks at the dangers that outwardly menace the church of the Redeemer; when one sees the Assyrians gathering thickly around her—infidelity, false doctrine, heresy, or schism, threatening her very existence—who can wonder if trepidation should seize upon her staunchest members? Or, to bring the case home more pointedly to individual believers, where is the servant of Christ, who finds the way dark or his path perplexed, who perceives the adversary eager and watchful for his overthrow, and who trembles lest the Assyrian should one day compass his downfall? To such we say, gather courage from the history of what befel Sennacherib, the Assyrian invader of Israel. Know ye, that all opposition to God's truth is overruled of



God to accomplish the design that He pleases—that the enemy can do nothing except by Divine sufferance—and that whosoever God sees fit, He can hearken to the cry of His people, overwhelm their foes with confusion, and put a song of exultation into the lips of His redeemed.

Such, then, are some of the truths to be gleaned from the narrative before us. We shall not have pondered it in vain, if you go away more deeply impressed with the danger of making any concession to sin. Your safety in religion depends upon decision; there is a total impossibility, Christ tells us, of serving God and Mammon; we must take part altogether with Christ, or we shall forsake the only refuge, and be left to the mercy of every wind or wave of temptation. Not to make compromise will often cost you a struggle—it may expose you to conflict or to ridicule; but recollect that no difficulty is too great for one who has God for his defence—no freedom from scorn is worth having, if purchased at the risk of displeasing God. The world will never be satisfied with any concession which leaves you more than a mere nominal professor of Christianity. The Assyrian will demand, first, some tribute which you can easily render; but if you think to satisfy him with this, you will presently find that he will be content with nothing short of entire vassalage. Again, we have learnt from this narrative how a Christian ought to demean himself in trouble or affliction; not to regard it as the dealing of an angry God, but rather as the discipline of a loving father. It is to lead him to the throne of grace, not to keep him at a distance; it is to make him more eager after, in place of being indifferent to, communion with God. His privilege as a Christian is, to take every trouble and make it known to God. Hezekiah “took the letter, and spread it before the Lord.” Oh! that we might imitate Him in taking our trials and griefs and spreading them before God in prayer!—that so the water of sorrow might be turned into the wine of consolation, the seed of tears into the harvest of joy. Again, there is a lesson of abundant encouragement in finding that all adversaries to God’s people—all the trials they suffer, all the afflictions they undergo—are but the instrumentality in God’s hand whereby He works for their real benefit. The aspect of the foe may be terrible—but the cause of which God is the defender can never fail. Oh! that one and all of us might, more than ever, associate ourselves with that cause!—that we might throw ourselves into the great design of our Maker, and yield ourselves up unreservedly to His service! We are brought in the providence of God to the last Sabbath in the year; but a few moments more, and our last Sabbath opportunity, for this year, of hearkening to the preaching of the Gospel will have passed for ever. What account is there to be given as to our improvement of the Sabbath privileges of the year that is closing? How have we sped in our Christian course? A twelvemonth nearer to the grave—are we nearer to heaven, more intent upon its glories, better fitted for its occupations? Are there any amongst us on whom all the means of grace of the year past have been, apparently, expended in vain? Are there any still the careless, still the unconverted? Oh! that this very night the slumber of sin might be broken, and you might be roused to thoughtfulness and concern about your never-dying soul! Can you promise yourselves that opportunities will be continued for ever? that the Spirit will always strive? that Christ will always beseech? May He not in righteous judgment withdraw from you, if you continue so unkindly and so long to resist Him? God grant that if never hitherto, yet at length the call to repentance and faith might be heartily responded to! Join yourselves, we entreat you, to the people of God; forsake the Assyrians, and put in your lot with the few and despised flock of Christ: so shall you be of the number of those to whom victory is sure—conquest over sin—triumph over death—entrance into the kingdom of heaven.





